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MAY 2005

WORLD SOCCER comment

THE WORLD CUP finals are just over a year away. In football, it is easy to lose perspective – witness the excitable reaction to England's recent victories over Northern Ireland and Azerbaijan – but it is surely time to get serious about the countdown to Germany 2006.

This month, we begin a new series on the major footballing superpowers with a look at tournament hosts Germany. On page 32, Jurgen Klinsmann gives his most in-depth interview in English since his surprise appointment as national coach last year. Klinsmann talks about Germany's search for a footballing identity and the need to discover what German football stands for. It's a fascinating admission from the coach and former captain of one of the most successful countries in World Cup history. It begs all sorts of questions about the current state of the international game.

For a start, what constitutes an international superpower? Are France still worthy of inclusion among the elite? That's debatable when the senior side are in danger of missing out on Germany, and when their youth sides are now missing out on talented Africa-born players – possible future Desaillys and Vieiras – thanks to a change in international regulations.

Do countries need a strong sense of footballing identity to succeed? The example of Greece, who muscled their way through to the winner's podium at Euro 2004, suggests that most coaches may be concerned with more prosaic matters. But the Greek experience still offers hope to us all that upsets can and will happen.

At club level, of course, the opposite is happening. Chelsea are ripping their way through the traditions and conventions of the European game. Much of Jose Mourinho's 'angry young man' facade stems from the injustices he feels he has suffered as an outsider – the man who rose to become one of Europe's top coaches without having played seriously as a professional, the coach who defied the continent's richest clubs to achieve success with Porto. Yet Chelsea have established themselves as a superpower thanks to their owner's chequebook, not their legacy of great football.

The beauty of international football is that there are no Roman Abramovichs. Success cannot be bought overnight. Of course, money is a factor, but only up to a point. The richest countries can afford the best training facilities, and hire coaches with the biggest reputations. But the most important factor remains the ability and motivation of the players. The recent emergence of Ivory Coast and Ukraine is proof of that – and cause for celebration.

Gavin Hamilton, Editor (gavin_hamilton@ipcmedia.com)

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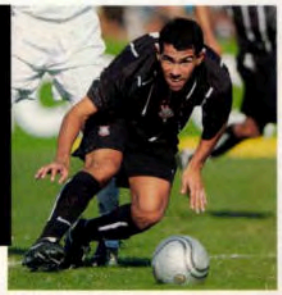
DONOVAN MAKES SHOCK RETURN TO MLS

UNITED STATES: Landon Donovan is unexpectedly back playing in Major League Soccer after a disastrous three-month spell at Bayer Leverkusen. **Page 58**

CRUNCH TIME FOR CORINTHIANS

BRAZIL: Corinthians have spent vastly more than their rivals ahead of the new national championship. So now the pressure is on to deliver. **Page 54**



WORLD CUP COUNTDOWN

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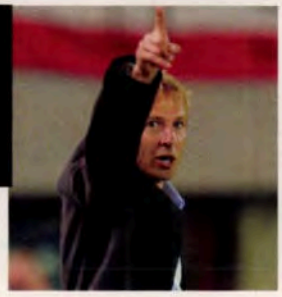

BAD START FOR BLIND

HOLLAND: Danny Blind had a worst-case scenario start as Ajax coach, seeing his new charges lose 4-0 at home to leaders PSV Eindhoven. **Page 46**

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GERMANY: Fan violence marred the national team's 1-0 friendly win in Slovenia. **Page 45**

BLOKHIN STAYS ON TO SECURE VICTORY

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STAMPEDE DEATHS ECLIPSE IRAN WIN

IRAN: The deaths of six fans in a stampede at Tehran's Azadi stadium overshadowed the latest rounds of Asia's World Cup qualifying tournament. **Page 38**

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SPAIN: Barcelona's lucky escape against Betis brought the Liga title a step closer. **Page 14**

APRIL FOOL? IT'S NO JOKE

FRANCE: A great period for French football may be drawing to a close. **Page 18**

BID TO JOIN AFC TAKES OFF

AUSTRALIA: After three decades of fruitless attempts, Australia's bid to leave Oceania and join the larger and stronger Asian Football Confederation has received a huge boost. **Page 60**

● 08/03/05

Heads you win...John Terry celebrates scoring the winning goal in Chelsea's thrilling encounter with Barcelona at Stamford Bridge

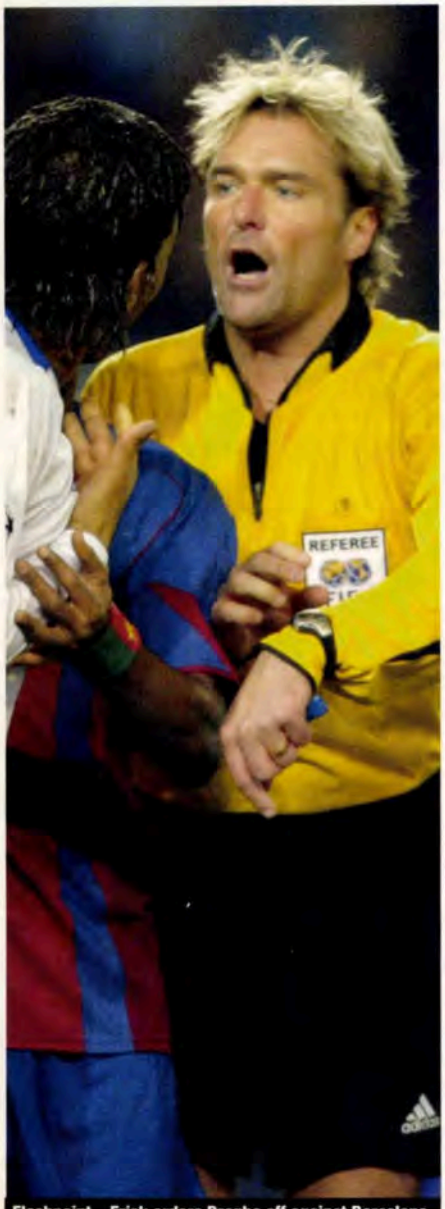
● 08/03/05

Lyon's roar...the French champions hit an astonishing seven goals past a startled Werder Bremen to win 10-2 on aggregate

● 08/03/05

Making progress...Hernan Crespo scores the only goal against Man United at San Siro to put Milan through

HEADLINERS



Flashpoint...Frisk orders Drogba off against Barcelona

ANDERS FRISK

The flamboyant ref was partly to blame for his own downfall

NO EXCUSE CAN be offered for the mindless morons who trampled all over the personal life of referee Anders Frisk after his monstering by Jose Mourinho in the wake of the Barcelona-Chelsea Champions League tie at Camp Nou.

But the Swede may have been, to some extent, the author of his own downfall.

The maxim used to be that a referee was doing a good job if he went through a game unnoticed. That began to change when FIFA relaxed the rules on what colours referees might wear. Referees were encouraged to throw off the black garb and develop – literally – a more colourful profile.

Officials such as Frisk stretched that unwritten exhortation to its limit. His fake tan, the tossing of those bleached locks and the overblown theatricality of the manner in which he flourished his cards said: "Look at me, I'm in charge, I'm the real superstar here."

Frisk-style refereeing provokes fans and, in the heat of the competitive, combative moment, provokes them beyond the sensible rigours of acceptable behaviour.

That was what happened when Frisk was struck by a cigarette lighter after sending off Philippe Mexes in Rome in the Champions League last September; that was what happened when he was pelted with coins and bottles at a subsequent Swedish League match between Helsingborgs and Landskrona. Three years ago he was criticised by Malmo president Bengt Madsen for needing to be "always the centre of attention".

It was a racing certainty that when Frisk came to retire, he would not go quietly. But even he may not have envisaged making quite such a dramatic exit after his half-time exchange of a greeting with Barcelona coach Frank Rijkaard, the expulsion of Chelsea forward Didier Drogba and subsequent accusations of partiality from Chelsea's X-ray-eyed coach, Jose Mourinho.

> **'I won't ever go out on a football pitch again. I am too scared. It is not worth it. Unfortunately, that is the way football looks in 2005. I've had enough'**

Mourinho, it later emerged, had not told the truth. He did NOT see Rijkaard go into Frisk's dressing-room, he was merely repeating tunnel gossip raised in the heat of the moment.

Chelsea were fined £33,000 by UEFA, assistant coach Steve Clarke and security officer Les Miles were reprimanded, and Mourinho was fined £9,000 and banned from the touchline for the two Champions League quarter-final matches against Bayern Munich for bringing the game into disrepute.

The Chelsea boss responded with a grumpy silence, which fuelled speculation that he was so angry at the club's refusal to appeal that he was considering quitting at the season's end. The fact that Chelsea moved so quickly to agree a lucrative three-year contract extension with their unhappy

● 09/03/05

Adios...Marcelo Zalayeta scores a late winner in extra-time for Juventus in Turin to send Real Madrid out of the Champions League

● 11/03/05

Calling it quits...Anders Frisk shocks European football by resigning after receiving death threats from angry fans

manager suggests Mourinho had in fact threatened to leave.

Mourinho's contractual situation is immaterial to Frisk. Nothing can restore the refereeing career from which he quit – at 42, three years early – because of the death threats to himself and his family on all three of his phones – work, mobile and home – by fax and by e-mail.

Frisk, ironically a Chelsea fan as a boy, said: "I have never had a problem with fanatical crowds but this was the worst two weeks of my life. I have been subjected to things I couldn't even imagine. I love to referee and I have done it since 1978, but what has happened to me over the last 16 days means it is not worth continuing.

"I won't ever go out on a football pitch again. I am too scared. It is not worth it. Unfortunately, that is the way football looks in 2005. I've had enough. I don't know if I even dare let my kids go to the post office. I have a big family and I have been worried – anything can apparently happen.

"My daughter said at first that I shouldn't let the bad guys win but we have talked about it and they understand."

Frisk is not the first referee to be threatened and he will not be the last. Switzerland's Urs Meier went through the hate-mail hell after disallowing a 'goal' by Sol Campbell for England against Portugal in the Euro 2004 quarter-finals. Meier carried on, Frisk felt he could not.

Now the Swede may be seen as a victim of the personalisation of referees, for which Italian Pierluigi Collina – who officiated at the Chelsea-Barcelona return – may share responsibility. But he was also a victim of the paranoia about referees aroused in countries where players, officials and fans consider officials undeserving of respect.

Take Mourinho as a perfect example. In his native Portugal, the "golden whistle" match-fixing inquiry has been running there for two years, with those implicated and questioned including FC Porto president Pinto da Costa, Mourinho's old boss.

Hence, when the Chelsea manager sees his opponents' boss whispering in a referee's ear, he thinks the worst – as when he accused Manchester United's Alex Ferguson of bullying League Cup semi-final referee Neale Barry.

Frisk caught the backlash. But then those who seek the limelight are also sometimes trapped in its glare.

Keir Radnedge

Bloodied...the Swede after being hit by a lighter at Rome's Olympic stadium

Numbers game

168,000,000...

value (in pounds) of the sponsorship deal agreed by FIFA with Japanese electronics company Sony.

15,600,000...

total value (in pounds) of the three-year contract extension awarded to Chelsea coach Jose Mourinho.

0...

number of professional matches played in Italy on the weekend of April 2-3 following the death of Pope John Paul II.

3...

number of months Landon Donovan lasted back at Bayer Leverkusen before returning to Major League Soccer.

31...

number of days of a three-month prison sentence for drink-driving offences served by Birmingham City midfielder Jermaine Pennant before his release.

20...

time (in minutes) that Syrian referee Mohammed Kousa was stranded on the pitch after North Korea's 2-0 home defeat by Iran in a World Cup qualifier as fans hurled bottles and chairs at players and officials.

● 13/03/05

Top dogs...Schalke go three points clear in the Bundesliga after beating closest title rivals Bayern Munich 1-0 in Gelsenkirchen

● 16/03/05

Candidacy...Michel Platini announces his intention to stand for UEFA president

● 17/03/05

Net gains...CSKA Moscow confirm their status as serious UEFA Cup contenders with a 2-0 win over Partizan Belgrade

WS WORLD SOCCER Brian Glanville

...on cheating and Chelsea...the international class of Joe Cole and Rob Earnshaw...why Wayne Rooney needs to be handed his cards...and the great GOAL! of 1966

Restrained...Carvalho holds Valdes (centre) as Terry heads home

'Mourinho's declaration that Rijkaard had gone into referee Frisk's dressing-room at half-time was well worthy to be impugned by UEFA'

"CHEAT, cheat, cheat!" squawked Jose Mourinho on Chelsea's closed-circuit TV, after his team had played Manchester United at Stamford Bridge. The implication was that United had won favour during the second half after United manager Alex Ferguson had talked to the referee as they left the field at half-time. Mourinho has now been sanctioned for his comments.

But who cheat-cheat-cheated at The Bridge when Chelsea edged past Barcelona with a late goal that should never have been allowed? Why, Ricardo Carvalho, who restrained Barca keeper Victor Valdes, enabling John Terry to head in.

Regarding Mourinho's cheap shot at Barca boss Frank Rijkaard, when he jeered at his managerial achievements by comparison with his own, it was good of the Dutchman not to emphasise the chasm between his own huge achievements as a player and Mourinho's utter anonymity.

As for Mourinho's declaration that Rijkaard had gone into referee Anders Frisk's dressing-room at half-time of the first leg, it was well worthy to be impugned by UEFA and unquestionably led to the repugnant series

● 26/03/05

Shake on it...Asian confederation president Mohamed Bin Hammam welcomes Australia's bid to join his organisation

● 26/03/05

Fan-free zone...hosts Costa Rica beat Panama in a World Cup qualifier played behind closed doors after crowd trouble against Mexico in February

● 26/03/05

Drawing a blank...France play out another goalless game at Stade de France, this time against Switzerland

'There are two conflicting Rooneys: Rooney the phenomenal footballer, and Rooney the Scouse Dead End Kid'

of threats made to Frisk by the lunatic fringe of Chelsea's fans.

JOE COLE and Robert Earnshaw, two of my favourite British players for a long time now, were both on international parade last month. But whereas Cole has at long last been allowed to quit the substitutes' bench both with Chelsea and England, Earnshaw seems still doomed to occupy it with Wales and West Bromwich.

John Toshack, newly back in charge of Wales, said he may have made a mistake with his substitution of Earnshaw for Simon Davies after which Austria scored their goals in the 2-0 World Cup qualifying win in Cardiff. Frankly, I couldn't see that this was Wales' undoing, though for my part, I'd have put on Earnshaw from the very beginning, ideally up front alongside big John Hartson.

It has been abundantly plain from the moment Earnshaw made his debut in Cardiff against Germany and ran their defence ragged that he has an abundance of big-match temperament.

As for Cole, his fine recent performances, including a dashing display on the left against Northern Ireland in the World Cup qualifiers, seem to show that the penny has dropped at last. Yet for far too long he has been a substitute at best. Outrageously, the super-cautious, inert Sven Goran Eriksson would not bring on Cole during that dreadful last half-hour against 10-man Brazil at the 2002 World Cup, when England failed to produce a single shot on goal. Then, at Euro 2004, when Wayne Rooney had been forced off the field through injury against Portugal in the quarter-finals and things went wrong for England, Eriksson preferred to use pedestrians such as Owen Hargreaves and Phil Neville as substitutes rather than Cole.

Ah, the traditional English distrust of flair which seems to have invaded even a Swede!

DID our referees really have to be told to flourish their cards when players swore at them? An appalling scene was created when Wayne Rooney pursued the poor, pathetic, cringing Graham Poll with an infinite volley of abuse during Manchester United's February League game against Arsenal. Recently, we have had schoolmasters deploring the effect of such televised behaviour on their pupils, and no doubt they are right. Now, as if it were ever necessary, our referees have been ordered to deal with such loutishness promptly and vigorously. Yet to Poll, who let Rooney abuse him so disgracefully, I would pose the question, are you a man or a mouse? Foul and abusive language should always surely incur punishment.

Torrent of abuse...Rooney lets Poll have it

There are, as we know, two conflicting Rooneys: Rooney the phenomenal footballer, and Rooney the Scouse Dead End Kid. No one wants to inhibit his supreme talents, but surely he shouldn't have to "discover his feminine side" (if there is one), as has been suggested, to keep his temper in check. A red card or two would arguably be the best kind of therapy.

ONE has heard of a football film trilogy, written by Ian La Frenais and Dick Clement, that somewhat grandiosely will feature a young American player who figures in England, Spain and the 2006 World Cup. Unfortunately, it is going to be called GOAL! Exclamation mark and all. But this was precisely the title of the official film of the 1966 World Cup. I wrote its commentary and helped with the editing, and I deplore this lazy piece of plagiarism.

GOAL! – the 1966 film – was seen as an innovative work, whose highly original cameramen greatly influenced their television equivalents. It won a British Academy Award, ran for months both in New York and Los Angeles, was even praised in *The New Yorker*, and is often referred to as a classic. It still flourishes in cassette form.

I made only a few hundred pounds out of it, take it or leave it, and was glad enough to take it, coming in only at the rough-cut stage when the late B S Johnson, a fellow writer, was sacked. It seemed a privilege simply to be involved with the record of England's World Cup victory.

I've no idea whether the coming trilogy, its initial part due in August, will be good, bad or indifferent. I simply wish they'd had the decency and ingenuity to find another title for it. OWN GOAL, perhaps, with or without the exclamation mark.

Read Brian Glanville's weekly column at www.worldsoccer.com

● 26/03/05

Bang to rights...Slovenian riot police arrest German fans after the international in Celje

● 27/03/05

Peace mission...Jose Mourinho takes time out from Chelsea to coach teams of Palestinian and Israeli children

● 31/03/05

Laying down the law...UEFA fines Chelsea £33,000 and bans coach Jose Mourinho from the touchline for two matches for their part in the Anders Frisk affair

The lowdown on...

Udinese

Black and white dynamite...Pizarro, Di Natale and Iaquinta

What's all the fuss about?
After several seasons of UEFA Cup football, the club from the Friuli region of north-east Italy have their sights trained on a much bigger prize. Fourth in Serie A as the campaign approaches its final furlongs, the 'bianconeri' (white and blacks) are well-placed to clinch a first-ever Champions League berth. Not only is the young team achieving outstanding results but they also play with style. Italy boss Marcello Lippi says they are the most attractive side in the country and recently gave first caps to four Udinese players: keeper Morgan De Sanctis, midfielder Giampiero Pinzi and forwards Vincenzo Iaquinta and David Di Michele.

What's their history?
In the early days, they were constantly in transit between the regional leagues and Serie C and B. But after winning promotion to the top flight in 1950, they made rapid strides, achieving their finest hour with a runners-up spot to Milan in the 1954-55 championship. Sadly, they could not build on that success and in the 1960s and 1970s the club were marooned in the Third Division. For most of the 1980s, they were back in Serie A and for two glorious seasons (1983-85) they even had Brazilian midfield star Zico in their ranks. Since promotion to Serie A in 1995, they have established themselves as one of the best provincial clubs in Italy, finishing in the top eight in six of the past eight seasons.

Who's their powerbroker?
Industrialist Giampaolo Pozzo has owned the club since 1986. Made his pile with a flourishing electrical tool company and brought hard-headed business sense to the club. Budgetary restraint is his watchword and Udinese are one of the few profitable clubs in Italy. Pozzo was also responsible for setting up a worldwide network of scouts, which has unearthed a number of talented, affordable young players. Gave up the club presidency six years ago but still pulls the strings.

Don't mention...
'Passaportopoli'. Their part in the European passport scandal which came to light in 2001. Brazilian players Warley, Jorginho and Alberto were suspended after they were discovered to have fake Portuguese passports, and the club were heavily fined.

Who picks the team?
Luciano Spalletti has worked wonders since returning for his second spell at the Stadio Friuli at the start of the 2002-03 season. Clever tactically, meticulous in his preparation for matchdays and a genuinely nice guy, the shaven-headed Spalletti made his name as the coach who took Empoli from Serie C to A in the late 1990s and has also taken charge of Sampdoria, Venezia and Ancona. Is reported to be on the wanted list of Fiorentina, the club he supported as a boy.

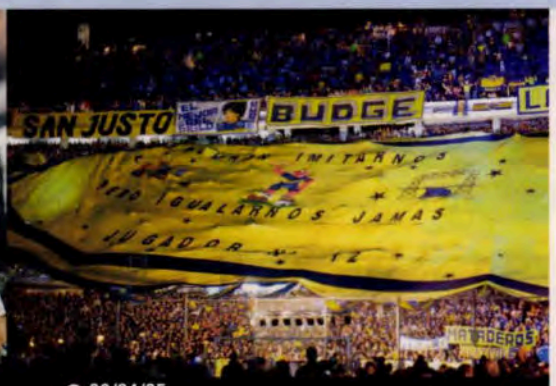
What's the Spalletti philosophy?
Light years away from *catenaccio*. He wants his team to attack, to take risks, and if that means leaving themselves slightly exposed at the back, so be it. Favours a high-tempo 3-4-3 formation, with players who work tirelessly for one another.

Who are the main men?
The attacking trident: powerful central striker (Iaquinta), who is flanked by two busy, mobile goal-hungry attackers (Antonio Di Natale on the right and Di Michele on the left). Equally fundamental are imaginative Chilean playmaker David Pizarro, steady keeper De Sanctis and two dynamic wide midfielders – Czech Marek Jankulovski (left) and Pinzi (right).

What's their stadium like?
Built in 1976, the 42,500-capacity Stadio Friuli looks good with its huge concrete arch over the main stand. But a ground with three open sides – particularly relevant since it rains a lot in Udine – and an athletics track around it does have its problems. Surprisingly for a team on the up, Udinese's average attendance is only 15,000. Pozzo says the locals would rather socialise in a bar than go to the football.

● 02/04/05

Fight club...Lee Bowyer and Kieron Dyer come to blows during Newcastle's defeat by Aston Villa



● 02/04/05

It's a wrap...Boca Juniors fans celebrate their club's centenary with a giant banner at La Bombonera stadium

GOOD MONTH FOR...

Robert Earnshaw...the West Brom striker scored a hat-trick against Charlton, thus becoming the first player to score hat-tricks in all four divisions of English professional football. In addition, Earnshaw has hit hat-tricks in the League Cup and FA Cup – and not forgetting his three goals for Wales against Scotland last year.

Record-breaker...Earnshaw

Ukraine...No Shevchenko? No problem. Oleh Blokhin's side are on course to qualify for their first major finals after beating Denmark in Kiev despite the absence of their inspirational captain through injury.

PSV...on course for the Dutch League title after beating Ajax 4-0 in Amsterdam – and punching well above their weight in the Champions League knockout stages.

Puma...the kit manufacturers were celebrating after a German judge ruled that Cameroon's controversial one-piece kit should not have been banned by FIFA.

BAD MONTH FOR...

Freddie Kanoute...the Tottenham striker received death threats from fans angry at Mali's World Cup defeat to Togo. Kanoute called it "the scariest experience of my career" and says he may now quit the national team.

Petrik Sander...the coach of German side Energie Cottbus was hospitalised after a firework thrown from the stands landed by him at a game at Erzgebirge Aue.

Malawi...who were taunted by Tunisia's players before their World Cup qualifier because they were wearing England tracksuits donated by the Football Association.

Tracksuit troubles...Malawi (in red)

"We need to buy at least 30 pairs and they are very expensive. But for the time being we will have to do with the England tracksuits," said federation general secretary Roosevelt Mpinganjira.

Juan Arango ... Real Mallorca's Venezuelan international ended up with 47 stitches, a fractured cheekbone and a couple of days in intensive care after a violent tackle by Sevilla defender Javi Navarro.

Notes & quotes

"Why should I help you out? When people ask me for my view, they usually have to pay for it. I'm helping you pay your mortgage and what am I getting in return? People who want my views pay."

Phil Neal, Liverpool's captain at Heysel, demands money from *The Observer* before sharing his memories on the tragic events of 20 years ago.

"We shall not be releasing any player from the Confederations Cup."

The Brazilian federation denies a story on Ronaldo's website that he has been excused this summer's tournament.

"In the past you lost one game and you were gone."

Australia coach Frank Farina welcomes his country's planned switch from Oceania to the Asian confederation.

"We weren't happy with his work, his training methods and especially his choice of players."

Armenian football chief Ruben Hayrapetyan gives his reasons for firing Frenchman Bernard Casoni as national coach.

"I think it would be a good thing to hear Abramovich. Every club has its own values and I'd like to hear someone at Chelsea come out and say what theirs are."

Arsene Wenger calls on the Chelsea owner to make his views known.

"He will only go if a Juventus, Manchester United or Real Madrid make him an offer. You don't leave Lyon for PSG."

Lyon president Jean-Michel Aulas on the future of his in-demand coach Paul Le Guen.

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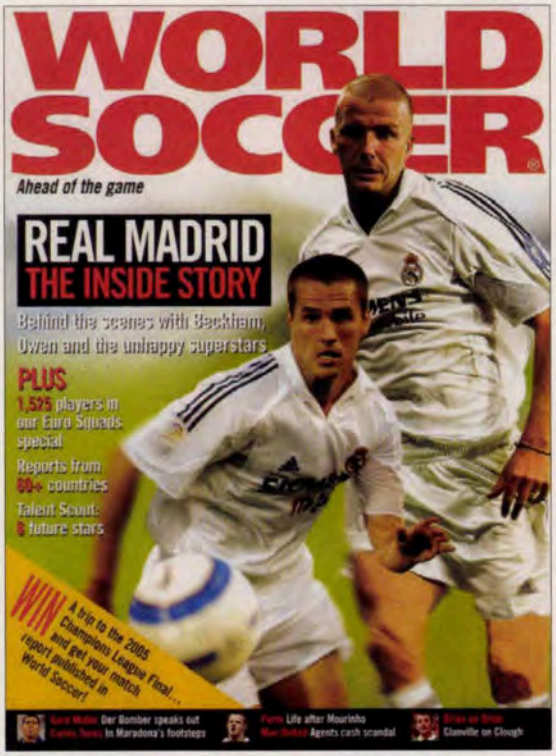

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Get out of jail free

Barcelona's lucky escape against Betis brings the title closer

SID LOWE
in Madrid

WHEN GIOVANNI VAN BRONCKHORST dashed through the middle and nudged the ball over Real Betis keeper Toni Doblas to score at Camp Nou, he celebrated as if he'd won the League title.

Which, perhaps, he had. Rarely has an equaliser tasted so good. "It felt like a victory," Van Bronckhorst said, still beaming from ear to ear, after his 95th-minute goal. And a vital victory, at that.

Barcelona had trailed 3-1, brought it back to 3-2 thanks to a Samuel Eto'o penalty awarded after a dreadful dive from Juliano Belletti somehow fooled referee Alfonso Pino Zamorano, and finally equalised. Barca had seemed destined for their fourth defeat of the season – suddenly, they had been rescued.

No wonder Betis were furious. Over on the touchline, coach Llorenc Serra Ferrer was fuming about the penalty and seemed to say something to Samuel Eto'o. The Cameroonian, who had also scored Barca's first goal from the spot, once again proved himself different from the rest. He went across to the Betis boss, put his arm around his shoulder and appeared to apologise, calmly seeming to explain that, no, it wasn't a penalty but, sorry, my job is to take it and score it. Do you really expect me to do anything else?

Of course not, and score Eto'o did. No wonder Barca felt born-again. All the more so when the equaliser came and because the point, gained in the week before they travelled to face Real Madrid, was against the best counter-attacking side in Spain and on a day when Rafael Marquez and Carles Puyol were both absent.

Point made...Van Bronckhorst roars with delight after his last-gasp equaliser for Barca against Real Betis

Barca had played their get-out-of-jail-free card – and to great effect. Although Real Madrid cut their 12-point lead to nine after beating Albacete 2-1 later that evening, the season was another week older.

And besides, a nine-point lead meant that, even if Barca did get beaten at the Bernabeu, Madrid would need to get better results than Barca in at least three of the seven remaining rounds – two wins to make good the points difference and a draw to overcome Barca's likely superior head-to-head record, which is used to rank teams level on points.

That lead, in other words, should ensure Barcelona become champions, and denies Madrid all but the faintest of hopes of recapturing the title.

Madrid lose heart

In truth, most Madrid players had given up already when they lost 2-1 at Getafe three weeks before. While the official word was optimism, the players privately did not believe, and Guti publicly declared second place was all they could hope for. Barca's draw seemed to confirm that; the psychology was as important as the maths. Barca knew they had got away with it against Betis, and Madrid knew it too.

Not least because it had taken serious refereeing intervention to rescue Barca, giving the dubious penalty that allowed them to pull the score back to 3-2 and allowing an unusually long (but probably justified) period of added time, during which they scored the equaliser. The refereeing boot was suddenly on the other foot. For years, Barca fans have whinged that Madrid were the cheating recipients of favours, while Madrid dismissed them as sore losers suffering paranoia. Now Madrid, failing to see the symptoms they diagnosed in Barcelona, accused them back.

This, as much as anything else, hinted at fatalism in Madrid and optimism in Barcelona. "Things are going our way," Barca believed. "They just don't want us to win the League," shrugged Madrid players privately. The Madrid press began whingeing, so often the last resort of those who fear that defeat is imminent.

And yet as Juan Cruz, a lone voice in the Madrid-friendly sports daily *AS*, put it: "Let's not kid ourselves; Barca were unlucky to [even] be in that position [against Betis]...they had 15 corners and 20 shots on goal." It was, he recalled, like a famous piece of Peruvian radio commentary that ran: "Peru are attacking, Peru are attacking, Peru are attacking...goal for Brazil!"

Cruz was right, up to a point. There can be no doubt Barcelona deserve their League lead. They have lost five times fewer than Madrid, have conceded fewer goals and scored more than anyone else and, with the recent exception of Villarreal, play the best football of any Spanish club. In Deco, they have arguably the season's most complete player, they have the top scorer, Eto'o, and have been out in front all year; Madrid have only momentarily and occasionally closed the gap.

Barca are a side with a togetherness, pace and hunger conspicuously absent in Madrid, and an ability to perform, irrespective of results. Truly impressive Real displays can be counted on one hand.

But it is also true that Barcelona have bumbled through a number of games lately, a couple of times with the help of the referee; that five of Deco's eight goals have come from deflections; that they seem to be running out of steam; that Ronaldinho and Xavi have not performed as they did during the first half of the season; and that their squad looks horribly short following a number of injuries – against Betis, Fernando Navarro replaced Carles Puyol in defence and his shortcomings were consistently exposed. Meanwhile, the winter signings have added little.

When the full-backs find themselves unable to overlap, Barca also lack real width, often seeking a path right through the middle that doesn't exist – especially with Ronaldinho less inspired than last season. Since late November they have struggled too often against sides that sit deep and wait, and have missed far too many chances, especially at home. You wonder what might have happened if Henrik Larsson had not been injured.

Barca's recent struggles

Atletico Madrid took a 2-0 win from Camp Nou with just two shots, Valencia got a 1-1 draw without having to do much (and only a questionable penalty earned Barca that result), Espanyol somehow held on 0-0 thanks to an incredible display from keeper Carlos Kameni, and Betis were 3-1 up with three wonderfully incisive moments up front and an inspirational display by keeper Doblas.

Barcelona should now hang on to a lead that felt like it was slipping away with 30 seconds remaining against Betis. After all, they have been better than Madrid all season despite the tongue-in-cheek claim that the galacticos lasted longer in the Champions League – 24 hours longer.

The difference in each club's reaction to defeat, though, spoke volumes. While Real Madrid's fall to Juventus in Turin prompted obituaries and calls to rip up the galactico policy, in Barcelona the reaction was remarkably calm. The fact they felt robbed by Chelsea helped of course. As, inevitably, did the realisation that Madrid were also out and that back home they should still win the League.

But most significant of all was the fact that Barca, while they lost, fell heroically in London. Madrid didn't at the Delle Alpi. Barcelona played well; Madrid, quite simply, did not. Which is pretty much the story of the season.

'Barcelona had seemed destined for defeat – suddenly, they had been rescued'

Crunch...Puyol gets to grips with Milosevic

● Spain remain second in their World Cup qualifying group after a 0-0 draw with leaders Serbia & Montenegro in Belgrade. "We have to be pleased to get a draw away from home against a side like Serbia & Montenegro," said goalkeeper Iker Casillas. "Now we are in charge of our own destiny."

Spain, two points off the top, now have three home games in a row – against Lithuania and Bosnia-Herzegovina in June and Serbia & Montenegro in September.

Real Madrid striker Raul, in poor form for his club all season, was carrying a foot injury and appeared only as a second-half substitute for Ivan De la Pena.

Generation game

The new-look Azzurri are on course to qualify for next summer's World Cup

PADDY AGNEW in Rome

IT WOULD SEEM that if Italy coach Marcello Lippi was wary of the Ides of March, he need not have been. In the space of four days at the end of the month, he saw his team extend their lead in World Cup qualifying Group 5 to four points.

First, the *Azzurri* beat Scotland 2-0 in Milan. Then, four days later, things got even better in their group when Moldova held Norway to a 0-0 draw and Slovenia held Belarus to a 1-1 draw.

That night, Italy were not involved in World Cup action but, instead, fielding an experimental side in a friendly with Iceland in Padua. The disappointing nature of the 0-0 draw, allied to the importance of the evening's two World Cup results, gave headline writers a happy night out. "Italy: The Real Result Was In Moldova," ran *Corriere Dello Sport's* front page, while the same paper's match report on the Iceland draw carried the title: "Italy Won All The Same."

In truth, it is probably just as well for Lippi that Group 5 does not seem to be a tough one. On the night Italy beat Scotland at San Siro, one was left to reflect that a visiting side with a dash of audacity and some international class (Scotland had neither quality) might even have picked up a result.

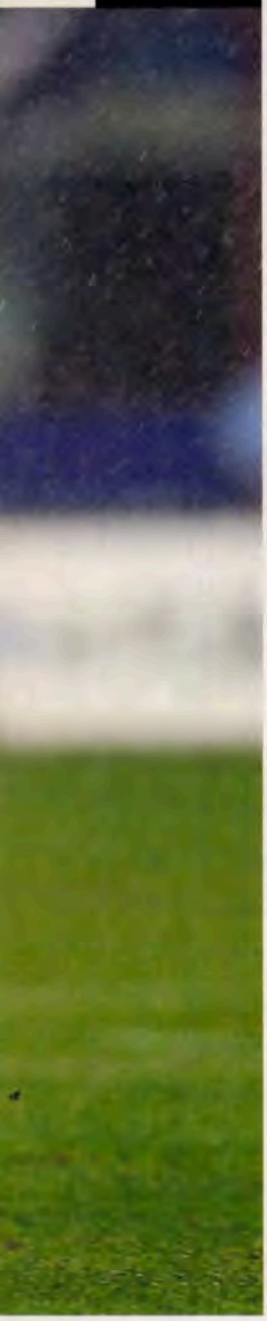
After the game, Scotland coach Walter Smith argued that his

side's second-half showing merited a draw. It was true that Italy goalkeeper Gigi Buffon made two superb saves in the space of three minutes just after the break, first from Southampton midfielder Nigel Quashie and then from Wolves striker Kenny Miller, with the Italians 1-0 ahead.

Yet the fact Scotland were still in the game at half-time at all owed more to Italy's failure to make the most of their total dominance than to Scottish resistance. The exciting front pair of Alberto Gilardino and Antonio Cassano, backed by Francesco Totti and Andrea Pirlo, had produced some moments of stunning, quality football.

Time and again, however, the Italian front line dallied rather than going direct for goal. When Cassano did finally get himself a straight shooting chance, in the 26th minute, he forced an excellent save from keeper Robert Douglas. Six minutes later Cassano got the ball in the net, but the goal was ruled out for offside.

Tired of the profligacy shown by his forwards, Pirlo eventually stepped up to resolve matters himself, slotting home an impeccable free-kick in the 35th minute after Everton's David Weir fouled Gilardino. From then until half-time, the Italians continued in their wasteful way. Gilardino and Cassano gave a master class in the art of one-touch football to set up a 45th-minute chance for Totti, only for the Roma captain to blast his shot over the bar from six yards out.



Up and away... Mauro Camoranesi evades a tackle from Scotland's Lee McCulloch

Result!...Antonio Filippini's Lazio are saved

● "We made all the guarantees we had to. Now you can say Lazio are saved," declared the Roman club's lawyer, Gianmichele Gentile, after convincing a court that they could pay a tax bill of £100million.

In the deal, which was struck with minutes to spare before the bankruptcy deadline, Lazio will repay the debt over 23 years.

Wake-up call

Convinced that the match was over, the Italians were rocked by Scotland's much bolder attitude in the opening quarter-hour of the second half. Those clear chances for Quashie and Miller not only reminded one of the value of a world-class keeper such as Buffon but also represented a wake-up call for the Italians, who, tiring visibly on the rain-soaked pitch, were less dominant and convincing than in the first half.

In the end, with his uneasy side singularly failing to wrap up the game, Lippi was forced to tighten up his midfield, bringing off Totti and replacing him with Daniele De Rossi in the 71st minute. Once again it fell to Pirlo to make up for the wasteful attitude of his team-mates, striking home in the 85th minute with another majestic free-kick that finally ended the contest.

After the game, Smith described Italy as the dominant team in the group, which only underlines the group's mediocrity. However, nothing is better for a team than winning. Under Lippi, Italy have now played five qualifiers, winning four and losing one (to Slovenia last autumn).

More importantly, Lippi would appear to be finding the breathing space necessary to implement a generational change. The days of Alessandro Del Piero, Christian Vieri and Filippo Inzaghi in the national team may be numbered.

The team for Germany 2006 looks like it will be built around a much younger group of players. Gilardino and Cassano have to fight off competition from Mauro Esposito, Luca Toni and Fabrizio Miccoli in attack. In midfield, De Rossi, Manuel Blasi, Fabio Grosso and Simone Barone are all pressing for places, while in defence, Andrea Barzagli, Giorgio Chiellini and Daniele Bonera are all strong squad contenders.

Postponement for the Pope

While Italy's games against Scotland and Iceland are unlikely to linger long in the memory, Italian football will long remember the first weekend of April 2005. As a mark of respect to Pope John Paul II, the federation postponed the entire professional programme, Serie A included, even as the ailing Pontiff lay on his death bed and fully eight hours before he actually died.

Legend has it that John Paul II once played as a goalkeeper. The reality is that he was no great football lover. Vatican sources often claimed that the only major football match he ever watched was the 1982 World Cup semi-final between his native country and his adoptive country, Poland and Italy.

Be that as it may, the entire Italian football movement agreed with the postponement. Inter's Turkish (and Muslim) midfielder Emre Belozoglu spoke for many of his colleagues when saying: "I think it was absolutely correct that the football programme was stopped. This is not a question of which religion you belong to. The fact is we are dealing with someone who had a huge weight in the history of the last century. I have many Christian friends and I say to them all that I am sincerely saddened by the death of their great leader. The thing I admired most in him was his continuous attempt to maintain a dialogue with other religions."

Emre was not the only well-known footballer to express his appreciation for the Pope. Roberto Baggio, the one time Little Prince of Italian soccer, told reporters: "In 2000, we played a charity game attended by the Pope at the Olympic stadium in Rome. Even though I am a Buddhist, I'll never forget that day and that meeting."

Not surprisingly, one of the most handsome tributes of all came from Paolo Maldini, who commented: "Standing beside the Pope, you got a very strong sensation. He was a person with huge charisma, something that sticks with you."

'It is probably just as well for Lippi that Italy's World Cup group is not a tough one'

April Fool? It's no joke

A great period for French football may be approaching its close

KEIR RADNEDGE in Paris

APRIL FOOL JOKES are not restricted to Britain. Bayern Munich's website marked the day by announcing the impending signing of David Beckham. Nothing like as comical, however, were claims that Zinedine Zidane was considering a comeback for France.

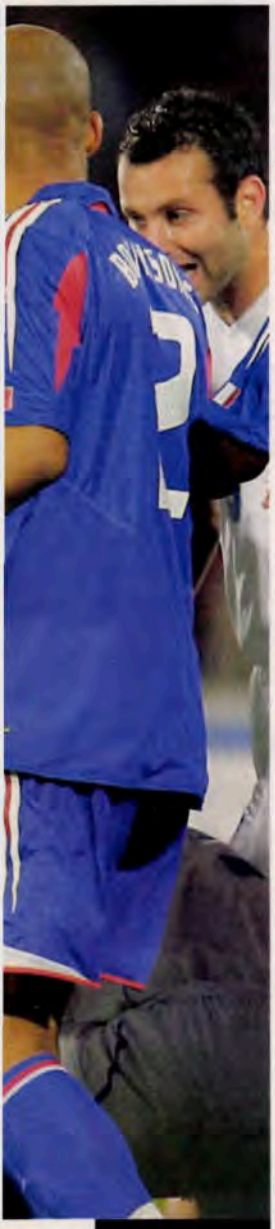
The playmaker's agent dismissed the story as a joke for the day but the fact that so many took it seriously demonstrated how close to crisis the French have slipped.

Already the spectre of 1961 is hanging over national coach Raymond Domenech, whose skills in raising the Under-21s for the best part of a decade appear ill-suited to directing the same players as adults. Perhaps the rejection of Domenech's original candidacy back in 2002 showed better judgement on the part of federation president Claude Simonet than his decision to appoint him last summer after Jacques Santini stepped down.

Back in 1961, having finished a then best-ever third at the previous World Cup, France fell off the road to Chile by losing, notoriously, by 1-0 to Bulgaria in a qualifying play-off in Milan.

That defeat proved disastrous for the entire French game. The subsequent depression sent a string of clubs to the wall, including double European Cup finalists Reims and Racing Club of Paris. If France fail to reach Germany next year the consequences will not be anything like as severe – Lyon's Champions League progress and a record £1.2billion TV deal provide reasons to smile.

But there is no hiding the fact either that the administrative



Frayed nerves... France captain Patrick Vieira gets shirty with referee Markus Merk during the World Cup qualifier against Israel in Tel Aviv

foundations of French football are quaking under the weight of various fraud squad investigations.

This is unfortunate for Michel Platini and his candidacy for the UEFA president's role. It ill behoves the French to dictate to the rest of Europe when they cannot put their own house in order.

As for luckless Domenech, a rising sense of panic was evident from his inclusion of calf-injury victim Thierry Henry in the 20-man squad to face Switzerland in Paris and Israel in Tel Aviv. At a time when international experience and *savoir faire* was called for it also appeared questionable to maintain the apparent vendetta against Robert Pires, Henry's Arsenal team-mate.

France were joint top of qualifying Group 4 with the Republic of Ireland and Israel so, on the face it, there was no immediate cause for concern despite some distracted performances since Domenech succeeded the disparaged Santini after Euro 2004.

Home-based players from Marseille, Lyon, Monaco, Lens and Bordeaux were joined by those from foreign high-flying clubs such as Juventus, Bayern Munich, Milan, Arsenal and Barcelona. Yet the subsequent goalless draw with the Swiss drew inevitable unflattering comparisons with the 3-1 win over the same opposition in Coimbra in the first round of Euro 2004.

Time to quit...Barthez

● Fabien Barthez has announced that he will retire in 2006. The Marseille and France goalkeeper did not specify the reason for his decision, but hinted at deeper problems, saying: "I will see out my contract with Marseille and I will be 35 years old. I think it's enough. I don't hope to remain in the football world. There are certain things about which at times it's better to be quiet. Football has changed, I don't like it any more."

Trezeguet red card

Patrick Vieira, Ludovic Giuly and the reconstituted Sylvain Wiltord went closest for France while keeper Fabien Barthez was kept on his toes by Daniel Gygax and Philipp Degen and his own temporarily confused team-mate Willy Sagnol.

Juventus' David Trezeguet, in and out of the treatment room in Turin for most of this season, wasted two good second-half chances but made some amends with the goal that put France ahead against Israel four days later. Unfortunately, he was sent off shortly afterwards for pained retaliation after his delicate knees were wrenched sideways in a clash with Bolton defender Tal Ben-Haim and his team-mates succumbed to a late equaliser from Walid Badir.

That left France and Israel as joint leaders on 10 points but looking fearfully over their shoulders at the Irish and Swiss, both a point behind and each with a game in hand.

Two days later came the false dawn of a conjectured comeback for Zidane, as if he does not have enough problems in Madrid. At least the issue stirred unrest bubbling beneath the surface since the sad retreat from Lisbon.

Monaco coach Didier Deschamps is one among many who believe that not enough effort was made to persuade Zidane to delay his international retirement until after the World Cup.

Deschamps said: "No one tried hard enough with Zizou so he probably thought no one was bothered. I don't think he would have taken much persuading. But the team are nowhere near the same without him and even he knows that. He should have been there in the team from the start of the qualifiers and then we wouldn't be worrying about whether we go to Germany."

The outlook is even worse lower down the ladder. Less than a year after carrying off the European Under-17 title France are already out of the running in this year's tournament. Defeats by Turkey (1-0) and Azerbaijan (2-0) left them bottom of their qualifying group and wrecked coach Guy Ferrier's dreams of a title defence at the finals in Italy. France may also struggle to reach the European Under-21 Championship finals after Rene Girard's tyros lost 3-2 in Israel.

Off the pitch, Jean-Pierre Escalettes, Simonet's successor as federation president, has been preoccupied by a mountain of scandals that are threatening to engulf him.

The most high-profile concerns the 'Club Europe' broadcasting rights deal. This was signed in February 1999 between Marseille, PSG, Monaco, Bordeaux, Lyon, Lens, pay-TV channel Canal Plus and the marketing group now known as Sportfive, run by Jean-Claude Darmon, arguably the most powerful wheeler-dealer in French football.

The deal, which promised the clubs around £160million over six years but was wound up in 2003, collapsed partly because the process was not open to tender. Due process of law may see the federation ordered to pay back around £8m of its own initial 'cut'.

Similar concerns threaten Darmon's 10-year deal with the federation and players' union and other broadcasting contracts.

Referees against their bosses

Financial consequences are also likely from a civil war between referees and their bosses. The issue centres on their terms of employment. The federation contracts them as casual labour whereas the referees want the status of formal employment, which would lay an extra administrative and tax burden on the federation.

Alongside this is the ongoing investigation into PSG's transfer dealings, which will almost certainly implicate other clubs, officials and agents. Documents have been removed from the offices of the federation, the French League, Canal Plus and all the top clubs.

If Domenech can keep the national team on course for Germany then the negative publicity can be overshadowed. But the lesson of football history is not encouraging.

France have performed wonderfully well over the past seven years in winning the World Cup and European Championship and entertaining everyone along the way. But every era comes to an end and France have had a good run for their money. It may be nemesis, not an April fool, they need to worry about.

'Zizou wouldn't have taken much persuading to return but no one tried hard enough'

Monaco coach Didier Deschamps worries for France without Zidane

My life with the Old

In a rare interview, the Juventus and France striker talks to Dan Brennan and Andres Garavaglia

You are now into your fifth season in Turin. You have won two *scudettos*, notched an impressive 68 goals in 114 Serie A games, but also endured more than your fair share of injuries. Are you still enjoying it?
I feel honoured to be part of such a good team here. I am lucky enough to be able to say that all of the clubs that I have played for have been good ones, and I remain very thankful to football for what it has given me. But *La Vecchia Signora* [the Old Lady] is special. This is a club with great traditions, which has always had many good players. It is a proud feeling to be part of that tradition. As for life in Italy, I am still really enjoying it. I have everything that I need here and much more.

With three Italian clubs reaching the last eight in the Champions League is Serie A once again the strongest league in Europe?
I don't know if it's the strongest but I do know that it is a very difficult league to play in. All the main European leagues are tough in their own way. And I am not sure you can use what happens in European competitions to compare one league with another. Some teams are able to find a special gear when they play abroad, others can't.

Who are the strongest teams left in the competition?
They are all strong. Any team that gets as far as the quarter-finals is here because they deserve it. In fact, for me, any team that plays in the Champions League is, by definition, going to be a strong team because it is such a tough competition and they will have fought hard for the right to be there.

What are Juventus' main strengths?
We always stay patient when we can't score. That is because we are always convinced that we can eventually get the breakthrough. We are helped greatly by the fact that there are so many hugely experienced players in the squad. I can't think of another team that has so much collective experience as Juventus.

A squad full of experienced players does not always produce a strong team, though, as Real Madrid have shown. What are the core elements of Juve's obvious *esprit de corps*?
Most of us have been together for some time. When everyone in the squad knows each other so well, and you are able to read your team-mates just by looking at their faces, that can only help. I can't really talk about other teams' problems, but sometimes it can come down to things like injuries, bad luck and too much expectation from the press.

'I saw a therapist after my penalty miss in the Champions League Final'

After so much success with France and Juve, the Champions League is the one trophy missing from your cabinet. How much would it mean to you to finally win it?
Certainly it would mean a lot. But that's the same for anyone who plays in this competition. Domestic titles are nice, but European titles are very nice! I want to help Juve get as far as possible, but I don't like to think too far ahead. It's always better to take things step by step.

Are you still haunted by that penalty miss in the shoot-out against Milan in the 2003 Champions League Final?
Football can put you through some strange experiences. I always remember the good stuff, but I also tend to remember the bad stuff much more clearly. That is definitely one of the bad memories. That is why, when I was out having some treatment on my shoulder, I also decided to do some work with a therapist.

Can Juve handle the challenge of going for domestic and European titles?
We are convinced we are prepared for everything but sometimes things don't just depend on you. This is football, not maths. Anything can happen in football and that is why the game generates so much passion around the world.

How influential has Fabio Capello been in reviving the team this season?
Capello has a very precise vision of how the game should be played. He has a very clear idea of what he wants from each and every player. He always gets his message across straight away, and he is also a very patient character. That makes the whole team calm. If the coach is calm, then the players are, too, even during the worst moments of a game.

Let's talk about France. You scored in the recent World Cup qualifier in Israel, but were sent off a few minutes later. What happened?
I would rather not talk about it too much. I know I was in the wrong and I feel really sorry for leaving my team with 10 players. I was surprised at myself but I will learn from it.

France were champions of Europe and the world. Now the team appears to be making hard work of the qualifiers for Germany 2006. What has changed?
We are going through a transitional period but I am sure we will be back on track once more. I am totally committed to helping the national team do as well as possible, which is why I feel so bad about that red card. But sometimes these things just happen.

Brief delight...Trezeguet (No 20) celebrates his strike against Israel, which came just before he was sent off

Lady

Why do many of the players who excel for their club sides struggle to reproduce that form for France?
I can only talk about myself, but maybe that will shed light on what other players go through. With your club you train all week with the same players, but at international level you always only have a few days together, and sometimes that can make things difficult. You might feel confident at club level because you have been playing and scoring regularly. But then you join up with the national team and remember that the last goal you scored came three games ago, and each of those games was maybe played at three-month intervals – that means you can end up putting yourself under a lot of extra pressure.

Like Thierry Henry, you went from Monaco to Juventus. Is there any chance that you will one day follow him to the Premiership?
It would be nice to play in England, why not? But there are other countries in Europe I like such as Spain and, of course, Italy.

Would you like to be reunited with Henry at club level?
We have a perfect understanding, so yes, of course, that would be nice. Sometimes when we talk we say that we have to play together again. I am sure that it will happen, but I can't say where.

Both of your parents are Argentinian. Can you tell us a bit about your roots?
I was born in France [in Rouen], but I moved to Argentina when I was very young and only went back to France as a teenager. So I have very strong feelings for Argentina. My parents still live there. Whenever I can I go back to visit them, as well as all the friends that I still have there.

You started your career with Platense in the Argentinian Second Division – do you still have links with them?
Yes, the last time I went back to see them was when I was launching my personal website. They gave me a very warm welcome. They organised a dinner at the club and they even presented me with a Platense shirt with my name on the back – that was very touching. I will never forget the efforts made by the club, my parents and my family that enabled me to get where I am today in football.

Would you ever go back to play in Argentina?
That would be really nice, and you never know. I would like to play for River Plate because I am a River fan. Perhaps at some point I could go back and play for them then finish my career at Platense. But that is looking a bit too far ahead right now.

Free-kick specialists

1 Juninho Pernambucano

Unstoppable!

FACT FILE

Club	Lyon (Fra)
Country	Brazil
Born	January 30, 1975, in Recife
Previous club	Vasco da Gama
International debut	March 1999, v South Korea
International caps	23 (0 goals)
Honours	Brazilian championship 1997, 2000; French League 2002, 2003, 2004

"WHEN JUNINHO IS in this sort of mood, conceding a free-kick to Lyon anywhere around the box is the same as a tap-in," declared rueful Toulouse keeper Christophe Revault in February after being beaten by two craftily-struck shots from Brazil midfielder Juninho Pernambucano. "If he'd had 10 free-kicks tonight, all of them would have ended up in the net."

Juninho, whose second name comes from his home state of Pernambuco, is an excellent all-rounder. He can tackle, dribble, score from open play and pass with precision, and generally dictates the tempo of Lyon's forward incursions. However, what really sets him apart is his dead-ball brilliance. The Brazilian's tally of 48 goals in four years with Lyon includes no fewer than 19 from free-kicks – it is not surprising, therefore, that a hush of anticipation sweeps over stadia every time he prepares to try his luck.

Not since the glory days of Michel Platini in the late 1970s and early 80s have French football fans witnessed such an accomplished free-kick taker. Juninho can do anything with his right foot: smash home long-range drives – such as the 35-metre howitzer he sent scorching into the Bayern Munich net in the Champions League last season – clip the ball over the wall with so much backspin that it drops almost vertically into the net and bamboozle keepers with shots of uncommon swerve and dip.

Juninho, unlike two other specialists, Roberto Carlos and David Beckham, does not often thump a shot against the wall or shoot high and wide. His ethos is to be on target, to make the keeper work. "To my mind, a free-kick is an exciting contest between the keeper and myself," says Juninho, a key figure in Lyon's dominance of France's Ligue 1 over the past four years since joining from Vasco da Gama. "It's a little game. You versus me. I try not to look directly at the keeper. I concentrate on the sort of shot I want to try and where to put it. I have a lot of confidence in my ability and know I can do something worthwhile with a well-placed free-kick. Anyway, as far as I'm concerned it's easier for me to score with a free-kick than in any other way."

Born and raised in a military family in the north-eastern city of Recife, Juninho's earliest footballing experiences were in the hugely popular indoor version of the game, where there was little or no call for set-piece work. But he always had a natural inclination for the pot-shot at goal. "As a youngster, I would always end training sessions with some shooting practice," he said. "I'd aim for the angle of the goal or one of the posts. It was something I loved to do. It is part of me.

"I still love working on my free-kicks. It's just as well I do. The more I score from free-kicks, the closer the walls seem to creep forward. If the referee is lax, then I've no chance. But if the wall is at the proper distance, I'm in business. Even if they jump, they should never get in the way of the ball."

Unfortunately, Juninho believes he is one of a dying breed. "There was a time not long ago when every team had a left-footed No 10 who took the free-kicks. Now, there's not many left. They aren't in vogue any more. It's a pity because with the game becoming more and more physical and tactical, a good set-piece can make all the difference."

Nick Bidwell

Guided missile...Juninho is rarely off-target from a set-piece

2 Ugur Yildirim

Dutch master proves he's better than Zidane

HEERENVEEN right-winger Ugur Yildirim has some claim to be the world's best free-kick taker. After all, he won the first Free Kick Master tournament in Marbella last December. True, world-renowned dead-ball specialists Roberto Carlos and David Beckham did not appear at the event. But Yildirim did beat another master – Zinedine Zidane – as they duelled to beat Valencia and Spain keeper Santiago Canizares from 18, 21 and 25 metres.

Yildirim, born in the Dutch town of Apeldoorn to Turkish parents, was spotted by Second Division club Go Ahead Eagles. There, he was encouraged to hone his free-kick taking skills by assistant coach Rene Eijkelkamp, the former PSV and Schalke striker, and practice made perfect. Yildirim scored no fewer than 18 goals from free-kicks in his final two seasons with the Deventer club.

His exploits earned him a free transfer to top division Heerenveen last summer, and Yildirim has shown himself unfazed by playing at the higher level. With his free-kick taking to the fore, the 22-year-old has also shown his mastery of the art of the assist, setting up more goals than any other player in the top flight this term.

World beater...Yildirim outdid Zidane and co in a free-kick contest

Indeed, his only problem seems to have been deciding which country to play for, having held talks with the national team managers of both Holland and Turkey. Yildirim holds dual citizenship and at the start of the season seemed set to opt to play for the Turks. In the end, though, he decided to wear the orange jersey – making his debut as a substitute in the friendly against England in February – because he feels Holland's 4-3-3 system suits him better. "It was the most difficult decision in my life," said the winger. "But I'm sure I've made the right one."

The launch of his international career along with his club commitments and rapid rise in level suggest Yildirim may struggle to maintain his high standards week in, week out. But he feels he can cope. "Of course I'm tired after playing two or three important matches every week, but I'm not worried," he says. "As a winger, I always get a chance to cross or take a free-kick." Canizares and co had better watch out.

Klaas-Jan Droppert

FACT FILE

Club Heerenveen
Country Holland
Born May 8, 1982, in Apeldoorn
Previous club Go Ahead Eagles
International debut February 2005, v England
International caps 1 (0 goals)

Free-kick specialists

3 Marcos Assuncao

Betis Brazilian is best in Spain

EVERY PLAYER DREAMS of a debut hat-trick. Some even succeed. Few, though, have marked their first game at a new club like Real Betis's Brazilian midfielder Marcos Assuncao.

It was the opening day of the 2002-03 season at Riazor against Deportivo La Coruna, and referee Megia Davila awarded a free-kick to Betis. An expectant hush descended as Assuncao placed the ball, eyed the wall and readied his right foot.

The man who had just arrived from Roma had already gone through the routine twice before. And twice made the crossbar shudder. Could he complete his hat-trick? Yes.

With Depor keeper Jose Molina stranded, Assuncao's free-kick came thumping back off the bar again.

He looked to the sky as if to say "are you taking the mickey?", while over on the bench team-mate Joaquin laughed his head off. Even Assuncao managed a grin; after all, Betis were on their way to victory and he had already scored one superb shot from the edge of the box.

Besides, there would be plenty more chances. Forget David Beckham. The Brazilian with the tiny feet and the short, three-pace, flat run-up is by far the best free-kick taker in Spain, having now scored from 10 in two seasons, as well as rattling the woodwork countless times.

Starting his 'run' (it is more a walk) almost straight on to the ball, there is no wide arc a la Beckham from Assuncao, nor much of Beckham's power and pace. Rarely does he disguise his shots, either, but he is capable of making them dip sharply. More often, though, he is, quite simply, frighteningly precise.

Before each game, Betis's stadium announcer runs through the team in poetic style. "El portero esta asustao," he chirps, "porque lanza Assuncao" – the goalkeeper is scared because Assuncao is shooting.

And who can blame him?

Sid Lowe

FACT FILE

Club	Real Betis (Spa)
Country	Brazil
Born	July 25, 1976, in Caieiras
Previous clubs	Santos, Flamengo, Roma (Ita)
International debut	September 1998, v Yugoslavia
International caps	8 (0 goals)
Honours	Italian League 2001

Keeper scarer...Marcos Assuncao

4 Andrea Pirlo

Milan range

FACT FILE

Club	Milan
Country	Italy
Born	May 19, 1979, in Brescia
Previous clubs	Brescia, Internazionale, Reggina (loan), Brescia
International debut	July 2002, v Azerbaijan
International caps	14 (3 goals)
Honours	European Under-21 Championship 2000; Champions League 2003; Italian League 2004

IN THE CHAOTIC media scrimmage after Italy's 2-0 World Cup qualifying win over Scotland in Milan in March, one player and one alone was in constant demand. Hero of the hour Andrea Pirlo, scorer of both Italy's goals with flawlessly-struck free-kicks, gave so many interviews that he was just about the last man out of the stadium.

For the taciturn, understated Milan midfielder it was probably harder to deal with the massed ranks of reporters than it had been to slot home the two free-kicks.

Italy's win over Scotland may have been predictable but nevertheless it took them a large step nearer Germany 2006. Presuming Italy get there, no player is likely to be more crucial to their cause than Pirlo.

That might seem a mighty big call for a player with just 14 caps and three international goals to his name. Furthermore, when Marcello Lippi took over the national team from Giovanni Trapattoni last autumn, following Italy's disappointing Euro 2004, he probably did not envisage Pirlo as being on his list of 'untouchable' selections.

Lippi seemed uncertain at first about whether he could get the best out of Pirlo, who takes a deep-lying, central midfield-cum-playmaker role for champions Milan. However, the 25-year-old's performance against

maestro now finding his with Italy

Scotland may have finally shown the coach the way. For Pirlo's contribution involved much more than two superbly accurate free-kicks.

Just as Pirlo does with Milan, he showed stupendously accurate passing, good reading of the game both in defence and attack, and huge self-confidence when on the ball. As Lippi himself commented afterwards: "Pirlo is a silent leader on the pitch. His feet do the talking for him."

For a player who has become a quintessential element at Milan and looks destined to become equally important for Italy, Pirlo has had a difficult rise to the top. That slow climb is all the more curious when one considers that he had been hailed as a future superstar almost since he made his Serie A debut, for Brescia against Reggiana in May 1995.

As far back as November 1995, Internazionale had invited him to play in a training friendly to get a good look at him, and they finally signed him up in summer 1998 after he had firmly established himself in the Brescia first team.

But although Inter had been desperate to buy Pirlo, his coach – Lippi, ironically – failed to find room for him in the first team and advised him to go on loan to Reggina for the 1999-2000 season. After Pirlo returned to Inter, Lippi's successor, Marco Tardelli, made such little use of the youngster that he went back to Brescia for the remaining six months of the 2000-01 season.

The turning point in Pirlo's career came in summer 2001, when, for reasons best known to themselves, Inter opted to swap him for Milan's Argentinian midfielder Andreas Guglielminpietro (plus £1.8million).

But while Pirlo played 18 Serie A games for Milan in his first season, it was not until the next campaign that he became a fixture in the side.

In the close season before the 2002-03 campaign, Milan coach Carlo Ancelotti was struggling with the headache of finding space for Pirlo in a midfield dominated by the playmaking skills of Rui Costa, Rivaldo, Clarence Seedorf and Gennaro Gattuso. Pirlo suggested that they might try out a tactical solution he had used successfully when playing alongside Roberto Baggio at Brescia – namely, dropping deep in midfield and playing in front of the defence. With Pirlo there, Ancelotti could play Seedorf on the right, Gattuso on the left and Rui Costa or Rivaldo behind the front men.

It worked, Milan went on to win the Champions League in May 2003 and it is no surprise that the Seedorf-Pirlo-Gattuso trio is still a vital element in the Milan formation.

Looking back on his ups and downs, Pirlo takes a philosophical attitude. "I'm convinced that I would have made it, whatever the position I play in," he told reporters after the win against Scotland. "It's true, though, that from the moment I suggested to Ancelotti to drop me deep, I have had a good run in the team.

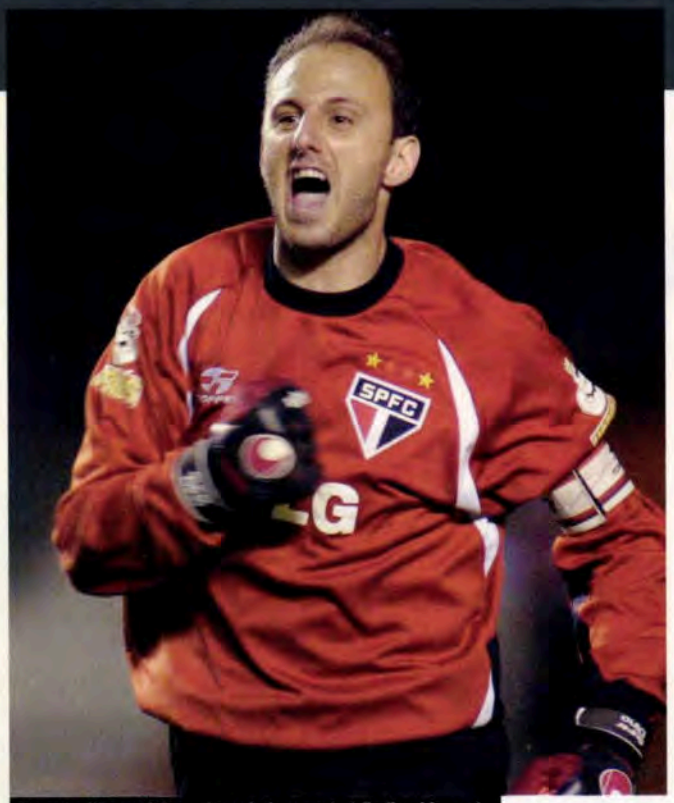
"My style hasn't really changed much. In training with Milan, I've worked a lot on building my physical strength, but otherwise nothing has changed. To be useful in defence, to win back the ball, you don't always have to go sliding into tackles. It's also about your positioning; sometimes all you have to do is take a step back. The secret is to keep it simple. Keep possession and keep the ball moving quickly so you tire out opponents."

Scotland at the San Siro – and Manchester United in the Champions League – can bear witness to the effectiveness of the Pirlo method. Next year in Germany, there may be other opponents who fall foul of it.

Paddy Agnew

Flawless free-kicks...Pirlo

Free-kick specialists



Placed with precision...Rogerio is expert at finding his spot

Confident converter...Ceh never doubts his ability to beat the wall and the keeper

5 Rogerio Ceni

Brazilian keeper who's more prolific than Chilavert

WITH 33 SUCCESSFUL attempts, former Brazilian international Rogerio Ceni has now scored more free-kick goals than any other goalkeeper in history.

Two factors played a key role in the 32-year-old's achievement. Tele Santana, Rogerio's first coach at Sao Paulo – where he has spent almost half his life – encouraged players to arrive early for training. At the same time, Paraguay's Jose Luis Chilavert was demonstrating that keepers could also get on the scoresheet. "I found myself alone on the training ground, so I started to practise free-kicks," Rogerio recalls. "I kept getting better at it. In the match someone has to take responsibility. I've shown that I can take free-kicks and would rather accept this responsibility than pass it on to someone else."

The keeper has scored superb goals at vital moments in both this year's and last season's Libertadores Cup. Rogerio is remarkably accurate, and especially dangerous from 25 to 30 metres. "My technique means I don't strike the ball as hard as some, but I can guide it to where I want it to go," he says. This means his free-kicks are usually curled low over the wall and into the side of the goal.

Some of his coaches over the years had fears that it was too risky for a keeper to take free-kicks. All have been won over by his success ratio. Rogerio has come unstuck only once. He spent so long celebrating a goal against Fluminense that he was out of position when opposing midfielder Roger scored straight from the restart.

Perhaps – just this one time – he could be excused his excesses of joy. After all, as he says, "from the point of view of the spectacle, there is no doubt that a keeper scoring from a free-kick is exciting".

Tim Vickery

FACT FILE

Club	Sao Paulo
Country	Brazil
Born	January 22, 1973, in Pato Branco
International debut	December 1997, v Mexico
International caps	13 (0 goals)

6 Nastja Ceh

Club Brugge's sure-fire Slovenian

A FREE-KICK is often as good as a penalty for Slovenia and Club Brugge creative midfielder Nastja Ceh.

Just like compatriot Zlatko Zahovic, the 27-year-old boasts all the skill and confidence required to mete out instant justice when the opposition indulge in foul play within 35 metres of goal.

Ceh, who marked his full international debut in October 2001 by curling home a free-kick against the Faroe Islands, may at times look rather nonchalant before taking a free-kick. But don't be fooled by appearances. He has that rare ability to place the ball wherever he wants with his precise left foot. Nor is his technique predictable – he is just as likely to hit a thumping shot past the keeper as to find the top corner with a floater.

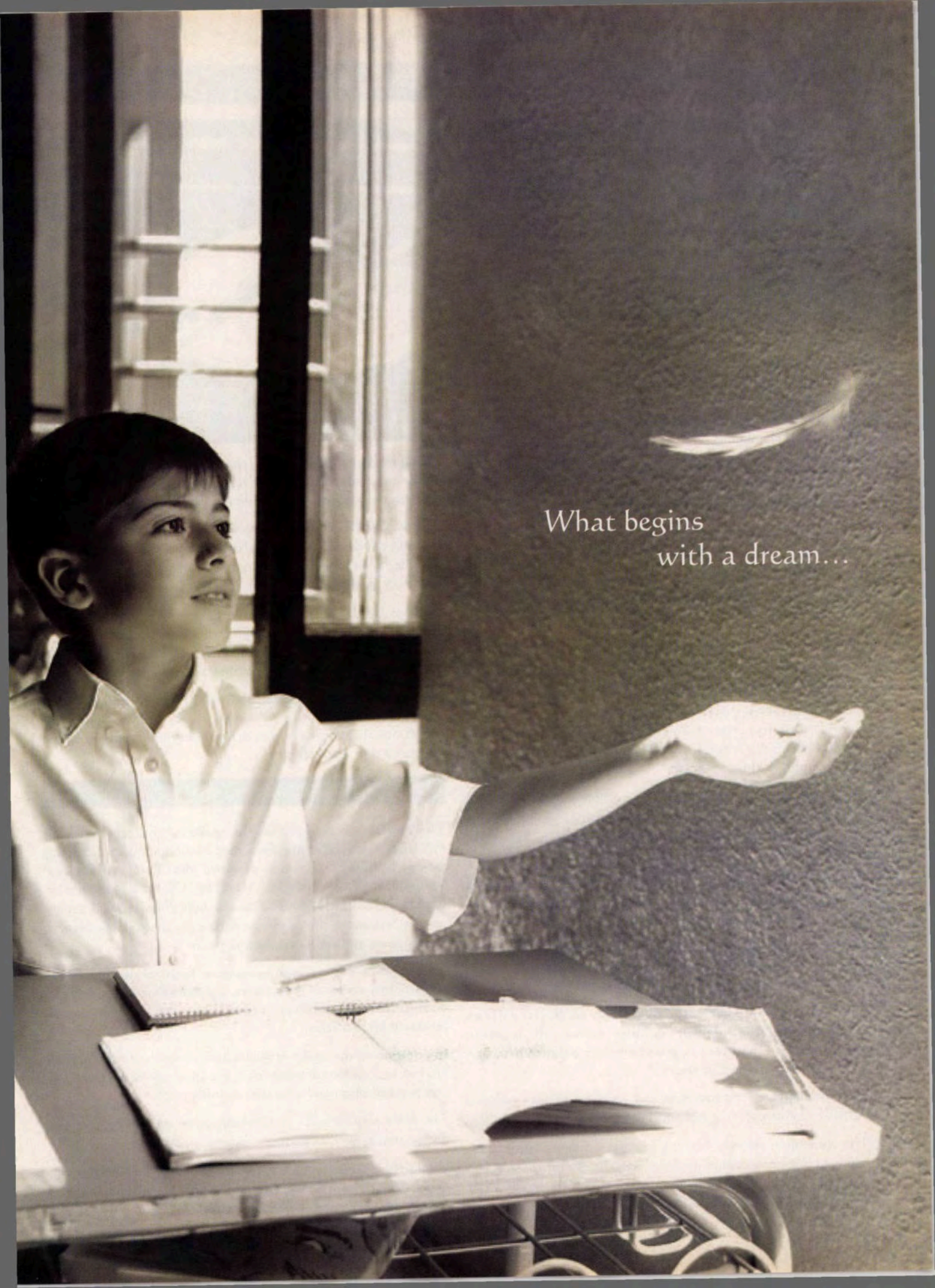
"While I do practise my free-kicks a lot, I think you either have a flair for this sort of thing or you don't," says Ceh, considered by many to be the best of the set-piece bunch in the Belgian League.

"From as far back as I can remember I've rushed to grab the ball when a free-kick is awarded to my side. It's a speciality that came about naturally. My technique is good and there are never any doubts in my mind that I can bypass the wall and beat the keeper."

Nick Bidwell

FACT FILE

Club	Club Brugge (Blg)
Country	Slovenia
Born	January 26, 1978, in Postojna
Previous club	Maribor
International debut	October 2001, v Faroe Islands
International caps	31 (5 goals)
Honours	Slovenian League 1997, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001; Belgian League 2003; Belgian Cup 2004


What begins
with a dream...

ASPIRING STARS ON THE LADDER TO SUCCESS

ASPIRE, the Academy for Sports Excellence, based in Doha, Qatar is one of the world's most unique and ambitious sports and educational initiatives.

Conceived by Qatar's leadership as a one-of-a-kind elite sports training and education institute, ASPIRE is committed to scouting and identifying talented student athletes and training them to become world-class sport stars.

Every aspect of the institution has been designed to meet the highest international standards, in terms of its facilities, equipment, teachers, coaches, staff and student athletes.

Central to the spirit of the Academy is its commitment to giving students unrivalled athletic training and the best possible academic instruction to produce the next generation of sporting success stories. ASPIRE provides a real balance between athletics and academics to help its student athletes become true champions.

The ASPIRE goal is to prepare its student athletes to face the ever-changing globalized world in which we live and also to serve as role models for future generations.

Construction of the impressive ASPIRE campus began in 2003 and the Academy opened its doors to its first students on September 9.

An inspirational working environment

The international team in ASPIRE works closely together, delivering the right mix of academics, athletics and leisure-time to create the perfect environment for the student athletes.

The organization consists of five departments including; Sport, Quality Management, Education and Social Affairs (QESA), Information Technology, Marketing and Finance and Administration.

The Sports team at ASPIRE are responsible for the innovative Talent Identification Program, which identifies young sporting talents through an intensive process designed to select the highest standard of student athletes.

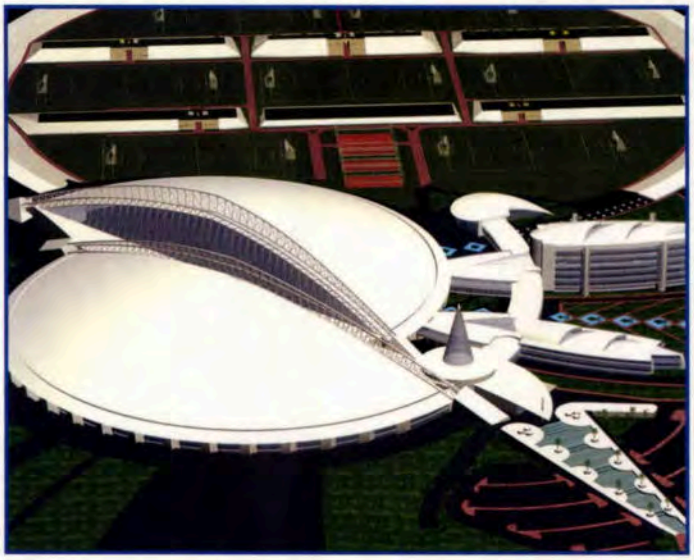
This innovative approach to talent spotting, is conducted annually at Qatar schools and tests for athletic potential as well as socio-behavioral assessments.

Last year, more than 8,000 students participated in the talent spotting process with 100 gifted athletes eventually being selected for the school's first year.

The Quality Management, Education and Social Affairs team ensures the highest quality across all learning disciplines and maintains the appropriate balance between academic and sport education.

By providing career management and sport psychology support, ASPIRE also cares for the individual needs of each student athlete.

The curriculum follows Qatar's highest academic standards, while adding components designed specifically for the student athletes' future careers including state-of-the-art Information Technology skills as well as the English language.



Using the latest technologies, the Information Technology (IT) department supports the development of the student athletes through innovation and creativity.

The world's first Comprehensive Athletes Database System is being developed not only to collect data on athletes, but to provide a unique and in-depth analysis of every single student's performance.

With a world class academy, delivering the message of ASPIRE Today Inspire Tomorrow, the Marketing team is responsible for raising national and international awareness about this unique Academy for Sports Excellence.

Managing the Administration and Finance arm for this unrivaled facility is no mean feat and a team of professionals ensure the smooth running and support of the 24 hour a day operation.

Unrivaled facilities

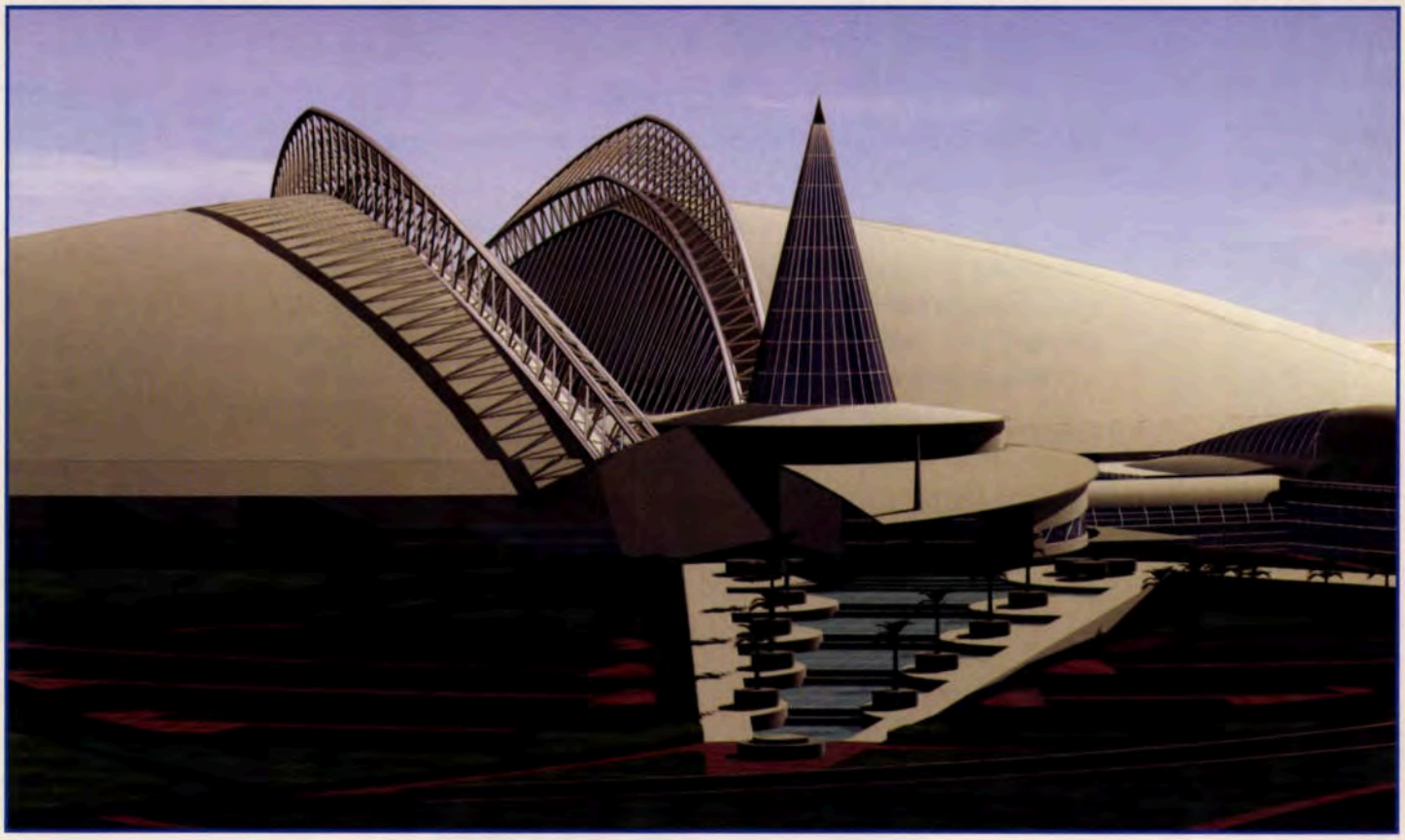
The largest sports dome in the world is the centerpiece of ASPIRE's unique facility. Designed by world famous architect, Roger Taillibert, who also designed the 'Parc des Princes' Stadium in Paris and the Montreal Olympic Stadium in Canada, ASPIRE's campus covers more than 290,000 square meters, including the academy buildings, the world's biggest sports dome and sports tracks and pitches.

The state-of-the-art main structure features lecture halls, classrooms, science laboratories, a library, an amphitheatre, dormitories, a medical centre as well as numerous recreational facilities.

In addition to the seven artificial and natural outdoor football pitches and outdoor running track, the sports dome covers a full-size football pitch and a smaller training pitch.

The dome also includes an Olympic-sized swimming pool and diving area as well as gymnastics and sports halls.

World class table tennis and fencing arenas, contact sports areas, squash courts and state-of-the-art weight rooms complement the dome's enviable facilities.



The future is bright

The sporting calendar for ASPIRE athletes includes numerous national and international sporting events, conferences and seminars.

The Academy is also hosting a series of workshops for the wider ASPIRE family involving parents and the local community.

Over the coming years, ASPIRE will increase its student numbers to more than a 1,000 by continuing to scout the best young athletes and attract the best coaches and teachers from all parts of the world.

ASPIRE is also committed to developing a sports culture in the region, encouraging families to participate in sporting activities and enjoy the many benefits that improved health and fitness can offer.

ASPIRE'S sports philosophy

With a goal to place academic and sporting excellence firmly on the Qatar map, ASPIRE supports the expansion of sport in the country through co-operation with Qatar's sporting authorities, led by the Qatar National Olympic Committee (QNOC), educational ministries and the wide range of sports federations and associations.

In just a few years, Qatar has become a familiar name in international sporting circles. From the stream of top stars coming to play for Qatar's football teams to hosting annual events such as the Qatar Moto Grand Prix and the forthcoming 2006 Asian Games, Qatar is well on the way to becoming a center of world-class sport.

At ASPIRE, Qatar's unique Academy for Sports Excellence, our children are given the chance to achieve the highest standards in sport and education. We will turn today's dreamers into tomorrow's heroes. We will discover the best young sporting talents and turn them into world class sportsmen. We will train them physically and intellectually and build them into future champions.

When they eventually leave us our athletes will be equipped to fulfil their aspirations and inspire future generations to come.

ASPIRE TODAY.
INSPIRE TOMORROW.

ASPIRE fact sheet:

• ASPIRE is a unique and innovative sports and educational academy

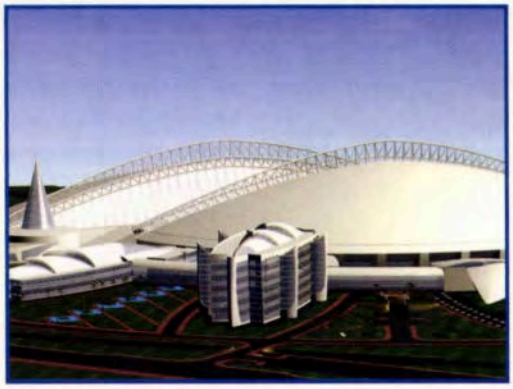
• ASPIRE is home to the largest dome in the world set in more than 290,000 square meters

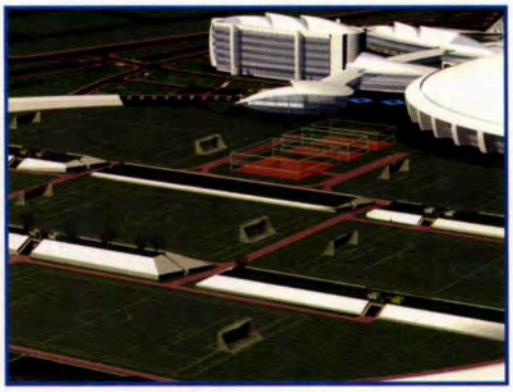
• ASPIRE includes seven state-of-the-art sports science laboratories specializing in high altitude work, movement analysis, power analysis, physiological attributes, sports equipment, mechanical and electronic works as well as fitness halls, physiotherapy and medical centers

• ASPIRE has 20 classrooms for subjects ranging from English language classes to biology and physics

• ASPIRE has eight full-size football pitches including an international standard artificial grass indoor football pitch

• ASPIRE has an enviable list of sporting facilities including a 200m athletics track, an Olympic sized swimming and diving pool, a gymnastics hall, sports games hall, table-tennis courts, fencing strips, squash courts, a goal-keeper training area, fitness suites and tennis courts





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ASPIRE TODAY. INSPIRE TOMORROW.

...ends in glory.

At ASPIRE, Qatar's Academy for Sports Excellence, our children will be given the chance to reach for their dreams. We will turn today's dreamers into tomorrow's heroes. We will discover the best young sporting talent and make them into world class sportsmen. We will train them physically and intellectually and then build them into future champions. When they eventually leave us, they will be equipped to fulfil their aspirations and inspire generations to come.

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Academy for Sports Excellence

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California dreamer

Jurgen Klinsmann, the USA-based coach of World Cup hosts Germany, talks exclusively to Keir Radnedge

Showing the way...Klinsmann is encouraging his side to develop their own style

What is your official title?
I am *Bundestrainer*. Before me, Franz Beckenbauer and Rudi Voller, for example, had the title of team manager because they did not have the coaching licence. But I do.

As a player it was thought you were too sensible to become a coach. What happened?
You only start to develop an interest in a coaching position once you're almost done with playing. I knew I would need, once I stopped playing, to take time out and sense where I wanted to go – not only with football but life in general, family and location. So we moved over to California after the 1998 World Cup and my last spell at Tottenham.

I felt I needed a break, to put some distance between me and football and explore other interests. I went back to university and did classes in different topics which had always interested me – computer and language-related things. I enjoyed that because it also gave me time with our son, who was just a year old.

Then I started to work more actively with two people who owned a sports business consultancy. In 2003 I became the third partner in the company when we were approached to help develop a football facility in Los Angeles by the Anschutz corporation. In the meantime I had the chance to work on different projects such as my coaching licence, which I did in 2000.

So I learned about working in different spheres – management, coaching, business and so on – without knowing that these were all topics which would help me in this role now.

How did you come to replace Rudi Voller as Germany coach?
It happened overnight. One day Berti Vogts called me to say he and his son were driving down through California in one of those big mobile homes. I said: "Hey, you must come over for dinner and we'll have a glass of wine before sending you on your way." So that was really nice, and we started talking about the big German disappointment at Euro 2004. The federation had already spoken to Ottmar Hitzfeld [about replacing Voller], who said he was not ready because he was still burned out after six years at Bayern Munich. They spoke to Otto Rehhagel, who said he couldn't leave Greece because "they would kill me". Then Berti asked me: "Would you ever consider something like that?" I said, spontaneously, that I would, under certain circumstances. But as far as I was concerned we were discussing it just like two fans. I said I couldn't

think of anything more exciting than guiding your team into a World Cup in your own country. But I just said that off the top of my head. So Berti said: "Would you mind if I have a chat with [German federation general secretary] Horst R Schmidt?" I said I didn't mind but I didn't know where it could lead because my life was here in LA.

And then?
Two days later Horst Schmidt called me and said: "Jurgen, can we talk to you?" And suddenly I realised this was serious. We agreed to meet in New York – halfway – and on the flight there I had the time to draft a first concept of how I could do the job, based on what I had learned down the years. I was really well prepared!

I met Schmidt and the German federation president [Gerhard Mayer-Vorfelder] and told them what I had been thinking; they put up their hands and said: "Hold on!" They had expected to be talking about a former player just stepping in but now they realised this was not their former player. Something had happened to him since they had last seen him in 1998, playing at the World Cup.

Our conversation took about four or five hours and, after that, everything happened very fast. The next question was: "When can you fly over to Germany for serious negotiations to talk about finances and contract and all that stuff?" I said: "Let me go back to LA and discuss it with my family and we'll see" – because we had already planned our vacation. Anyway, a week or 10 days later we flew to Frankfurt and finalised things.

Which meant what, precisely?
I wanted full control in terms of coaching staff and additional resources, and they said: "Yes, if we understand why you are taking a particular direction – why you want to bring on board Joachim Low, Oliver Bierhoff, a sports psychologist, fitness coaches from the United States – then it will be no problem." So I said: "Then let's get on with the implementation process."

Who were your first appointments?
Joachim Low was the first but Oliver had been informed right from the start because he was needed for a role we had never had before – an administrative manager for the team. So we started to build the environment within which we could work step by step.

The next thing was to explain the project to the players: how we were going to do certain things, what we expected of them timeframe-wise, what milestones we envisaged. We also talked about the philosophy of play, the style of play, and we tried to explain that because of who and what we were we needed to play in a proactive style – an attacking style, highly aggressive, taking the initiative – because we think that is part of our mentality. We discussed it with the leading players – Michael Ballack, as team captain, Oliver Kahn, Jens Lehmann, Bernd Schneider, Torsten Frings, the core of the team – because we saw it as important that they identified with what we were doing.

Does that also apply to the fans?
Of course. We told the players we wanted the fans to identify with what we were doing so the German people could say: "This is how we like to see our team play." Hopefully, we can do so successfully as well with a style of play which suits us. We are not Italy, tactically very aware, very smart, waiting for the one chance and usually taking it; we are not Brazil, with their beautiful technical game; we are not France. We have to find our own identity. Who are we?

So we talked with the players about that and we said to them: "We are going to play a World Cup in our own country. What does that mean? It means that the fans will be behind us from the first whistle, pushing us. We can't sit back and wait to hit the opposition on the break, because the fans won't allow it. The expectation, pressure, hype and all that stuff will be so big that we can't play on the counter-attack, even against Brazil and Argentina, because the fans are gonna push us forwards."

'We can't just wait to hit opponents on the break. The fans won't allow it'

Klinsmann warns his players that a counter-attacking style won't wash at the World Cup

Were you confident the players could take it all in?
We didn't know how fast they could assimilate it. Also, it was going to be interesting because they played different styles with their clubs. So we repeated it and repeated it and now, after eight months in charge, we can see the team is adjusting to this style of ours. It's not perfect, but it's a great foundation from which to go forward. Not only that, but we have been able to give the young players a chance to show what they are able to do.

Here in Germany, people have been saying for years that we have no young players coming up. It wasn't true but it seemed like that because they were being talked down before they ever had a chance.

Young blood...Huth is one of the new crop of players

So how does it work with the Under-21s?
We made another change there. We made Dieter Eilts the Under-21 coach and told him he would be very important as a bridge for the younger players into the national squad. Then we looked at our extended squad and we thought we'd see how far they could go. So we talked to the older players – like Didi Hamann, for instance – and said: "Guys, you're gonna have to step aside for now because we want to see how far these young players have come and how far they have to go."

We always keep a strong core to the side, but every game we throw in a couple of different talents, and we have all been impressed by how well they have done. The situation today is completely different now we know we can build on players like Robert Huth, Thomas Hitzlsperger, Lukas Podolski, Phillip Lahm, Andreas Hinkel, plus other young talents who are still in the Under-21s. Suddenly, after all the talking down, we have eight, 10 or 12 strong young players for future national teams. And some will be ready for the 2006 World Cup.

Has the goalkeeping issue been resolved?
We are extremely blessed in having two world-class goalkeepers. I can't think of another country in that position. This has been discussed at length in the media but the way things have developed since we took over is very positive. We opened up the competition while still defining Oliver Kahn as No 1 and Jens Lehmann as the challenger. That gave both of them a boost in terms of inspiration and motivation and focus.

We have made it clear to Oliver that while he is the No 1 we have to give Jens his chance. After all,

Friendly foes...Kahn and Lehmann greet each other during Bayern Munich's home Champions League tie with Arsenal

winning the League with Arsenal and going 49 games unbeaten means he deserves his space and credit too. It was very difficult for Oliver in the first few weeks, and also for Jens. But they took it in a very professional way and – this is something we are a bit proud of – now we see both communicating with each other, even joking with each other, which was never there before! They are pushing each other and, in our opinion, over the past eight months both of them have got even better.

Is it a problem having two bosses – two presidents [Mayer-Vorfelder and Theo Zwanziger] – at the federation?
We adapted very easily to that because we are not involved in the administrative side of the federation. In fact, one of our first moves was to create our own senior national team office. Before, the national team was always connected to the Under-21s, and so on down. The whole thing was one big baggage. We wanted to separate the national team from everything else. It has to have priority, so we need to be disconnected from the rest of the operation. And we wanted our own guy to run the new office, with his own staff. Everything we wanted to implement we justified to the two presidents, and they approved it.

This is a unique project. We won't have a World Cup in our own country for another 50 or 60 years, perhaps, so we have to push other administrative processes to one side, because they take longer.

Do you see this already as your legacy?
Exactly. What we are developing is based on a long-term vision which has long-term benefits, irrespective of who runs it. We told the presidents that if they are happy this is the right direction, then we can give them a profile for a specific person and what he has to do. I think that, in a certain way, what we've done is unique.

We started with the philosophy of play and the question of what are we standing for? At Euro 2004, Germany played with one striker, then two in the next game, then, because that didn't work, they threw in three strikers in the next game. We may admire the Ajax philosophy, or the Brazilian or Italian way, but these countries know their style. We're still working on it. So, based on what we agreed with the team and the coaches, we build on 4-4-2 and 4-3-3, always flexible and adjustable, but it's something we can build into the entire infrastructure all the way down to the academies. That was a milestone, it gave everyone an orientation.

You have told your players to ask themselves how they can improve. How can you improve?
I look at this entire project as a tremendous learning experience, in which I'm right in the middle. I'm just a sponge. What I learned over the last few years on the business side is that if you don't have the knowledge then you surround yourself with people who do. That's what I've done. For example, I wanted a sports psychologist on my side because I never went to university and studied psychology. This is why we had to change the structure.

The German system always had the *Bundestrainer* at the top and then assistant coaches under him and then the goalkeeper coach, and so on. It was always run top to bottom. When we came in we said this was not the way we would work. We would get a team and work horizontally, not vertically, because we want to make full use of everybody's strengths. For example, Joachim Low can explain tactical issues within 30 seconds very clearly, so I have to give him that space. Oliver Bierhoff is tremendously gifted at talking in front of the camera, working with the Bundesliga teams, putting things across to the media and sponsors. I say to him: "Please, that's your field, take it on." If a fitness coach comes in and says he can get 10 or 20 per cent more out of the players, I say: "Explain it to me and please go ahead." And because we work as a group I learn from the others.

Have the lessons of your playing career in different countries come in useful?
It helped me enormously that I went from country to country and could look at things from a different perspective. It's also helped me to have spent six years in the United States. It makes you far more open-minded, and it's not just me who's benefited. Joachim Low coached in Turkey and Austria, Oliver Bierhoff played in Italy, [goalkeeper coach] Andreas Kopke played at Marseille. So we explained to the team that they were working with a group of coaches who saw things from a different perspective. For instance, we told the players that we were following their performances at their clubs but that was not the only way we were measuring them. We said: "Don't think that if you have a bad two or three games for your club there's necessarily a problem with the national team. But we would like you guys to improve consistently up to the World Cup and, hopefully, far beyond."

Do you think German fans have accepted that their national coach lives in California?
Nobody had a clear picture of how it could work. There were many question marks raised – "he has no coaching experience and he lives in California". The doubts were understandable, so we had to start to find solutions. We knew it would take time to convince people, and obviously in football it depends on how the team is playing – results and, especially, the style of play. There we started well because the players played some very good games. Then people stopped questioning things like the coach flying back and forth between California and Germany. What matters is the quality of the work.

'My six years in the USA have made me far more open-minded'

How do you split your time?
I fly back and forth twice a month. I come eight days prior to a game and then I put in another trip for four or five days to get organisational stuff done. In fact, it helps me tremendously because I can look at things from a distance and I'm not around to hear all the nonsense in between. But I'm in daily touch with Joachim Low and the staff.

How do you keep up with German football when you are back home in California?
It's no problem. I get three live games per weekend over satellite, two German channels, the highlights of the Bundesliga, four full Premiership games per weekend, Serie A...

Finally, will you win the World Cup?
After all of this, I hope so!

Klinsmann's new guard

ON BECOMING GERMANY'S ninth national coach, Jurgen Klinsmann promised that no stone would be left unturned in preparing the team for next year's World Cup finals. Last month, in the latest stage of his masterplan, 33 players were summoned to Frankfurt for two days of fitness tests, with the emphasis on speed, endurance and agility.

Those under doctors' orders included two uncapped players (full-backs Christian Pander of Schalke and Fulham's Moritz Volz) and another seven who had broken into the national team set-up only since the start of the season. Those nine players are featured here.

Under previous coaches Erich Ribbeck and Rudi Voller, experience seemed to be the key criterion in selecting a squad. Klinsmann, however, has another path in mind, hoping that the vitality of his 'babes' will refloat the good ship Germany after it ran aground at Euro 2004.

Marco Engelhardt
(Kaiserslautern)
Age: 24
International debut:
December 2004, v Japan
Caps: 2
Versatile youngster able to play as a defensive midfielder, behind the strikers or at left-back. Has good distribution, is tactically aware and very industrious. Has made great progress since joining Kaiserslautern from Karlsruhe last summer.

Cheap giveaways...Fahrenhorst

Frank Fahrenhorst
(Werder Bremen)
Age: 27
International debut:
August 2004, v Austria
Caps: 2
The centre-back appeared in Germany's first two friendlies this season, against Austria and Brazil, but did not convince, generally failing to mark tight enough and giving the ball away cheaply. Returned to the Werder line-up in February after two months out with a knee injury.

Thomas Hitzlsperger
(Aston Villa)
Age: 23
International debut:
October 2004, v Iran
Caps: 4
Klinsmann switched him from his usual midfield position to replace the injured Phillip Lahm at left-back in recent friendlies with Argentina and Slovenia but the youngster did not cover himself in glory. Renowned for his powerful shooting from distance, he has clearly been distracted this term by on-off contract talks with Villa and rumours that he is heading back to the Bundesliga.

Robert Huth
(Chelsea)
Age: 20
International debut:
August 2004, v Austria
Caps: 5
A central defender of great physical presence and competitiveness, he was singled out for much praise by the German press for his effective displays for the national team in the early part of the season. But because of his lack of first-team football at Chelsea, he has not been able to build on such promising beginnings. Indeed, Huth was the weakest link in Germany's recent friendly win in Slovenia.

Redoubtable...Owomoyela

Per Mertesacker
(Hannover)
Age: 20
International debut:
October 2004, v Iran
Caps: 5
Lean, lanky stopper who has made the leap from Under-21 level to full national team with ease. His giant frame makes him almost unbeatable in the air, he is strong in the tackle and reads the game well. Could well start in the World Cup.

Patrick Owomoyela
(Arminia Bielefeld)
Age: 25
International debut:
December 2004, v Japan
Caps: 5
Born in Hamburg to a Nigerian father, this right-back or right-sided midfielder has been one of the revelations of the Bundesliga season and one of the principal reasons newly-promoted Bielefeld have comfortably stayed clear of relegation trouble. A redoubtable defender thanks to his aerial ability and biting tackles, he also loves to push forward, though his technique can let him down.

Christian Pander
(Schalke)
Age: 21
Caps: 0
A thigh injury prevented the left-back from making his national team debut on the Far East tour in December, but his time will come. He has been outstanding in his first full season as a Schalke regular, both as a guardian of his flank and as a provider of crosses.

Christian Schulz
(Werder Bremen)
Age: 22
International debut:
December 2004, v Japan
Caps: 3
Young left-back who took full advantage of a long-term injury to Swiss Ludovic Magnin last term, establishing himself in Werder's Double-winning side. Quick, tenacious and disciplined but needs to polish up his attacking play. Can fill in at centre-back or in a midfield holding role.

Moritz Volz
(Fulham)
Age: 22
Caps: 0
Labelled a teenage prodigy when Arsenal lured him away from Schalke five years ago, the right-back has not quite lived up to the hype. But he is a more than competent player, sturdy defensively and purposeful on the overlap.

Nick Bidwell

Outstanding...Pander

QUALIFYING ROUND-UPS

Ecuador join the probables

SOUTH AMERICA

NINETEEN-YEAR-OLD midfielder Antonio Valencia scored three goals in his first two competitive internationals as Ecuador took a big step towards their second successive World Cup finals. Valencia (see Talent Scout, page 67) was on target twice as Ecuador came from two goals behind to rout Paraguay 5-2 in Quito, then scored again as they drew 2-2 away to Peru three days later.

With five matches in go in the marathon South American contest, Ecuador are now on course to follow Argentina and Brazil, who are all but mathematically qualified, to Germany. Argentina lead with 28 points, followed by Brazil on 24, Ecuador on 20 and Paraguay on 19. The top four finishers are guaranteed a trip to the finals.

However, the battle for fifth spot, which earns a play-off against Australia (or the Solomon Islands, you never know), has become a real dogfight, with only three points separating Uruguay (on 16) in fifth and bottom-placed Bolivia (on 13). Colombia, Peru, Chile and Venezuela are sandwiched in between on 14 points.

After a brief crisis following their quick exit from the Copa America and the resignation of coach Hernan Dario Gomez, **Ecuador** have regrouped under Luis Fernando Suarez and look more confident than ever. After going 2-0 behind in 15 minutes to Paraguay – a Jose Cardozo penalty and a superbly-taken goal by Salvador Cabanas on the break – they replied with four goals, all from outside the penalty area, in a 20-minute period either side of half-time.

Valencia began the fightback when his low 30-metre shot was badly misjudged by the usually dependable Justo Villar in the Paraguay goal, then Edison Mendez, who scored the winner against Brazil last November, levelled with an exquisite effort from 30 metres in first-half injury-time. Just after the re-start, Mendez drove home Agustin Delgado's lay-off, and Valencia struck again as a clearance fell kindly to him to make it 4-2. Marlon Ayovi's penalty late on rounded off the win.

Ecuador's game in **Peru** had an electrifying start as Bayern Munich's Paolo Guerrero put the hosts ahead in the first minute and Ulises De la Cruz headed home an equaliser from a corner two minutes later. Valencia gave Ecuador a half-time lead after some shambolic defending before Jefferson Farfan's 58th-minute goal gave Peru a point. Peru's Andres Mendoza missed an open goal in the last minute.

Ball-watching...Edison Mendez, one of Ecuador's scorers, tries to evade Paraguay's Pedro Sarabia

Paraguay bounced back from their defeat by Ecuador, beating **Chile** 2-1 in Asuncion, with Cardozo again on the scoresheet.

Argentina increased their lead at the top with a 2-1 win in **Bolivia** – at 3,700 metres above sea level in La Paz – and a 1-0 defeat of Colombia in Buenos Aires. Jose Pekerman took a young, second-string team to the Bolivian capital, though one still full of players with Italian and Spanish top-division sides. But unlike many teams who believe that all-out defence is the only way to deal with the altitude, the Argentinians were not afraid to attack. They were rewarded with their first win in La Paz since the famous Ghost team in 1973, when a specially selected squad of players spent a month training at altitude in the Argentinian Andes. However, only a few of them made the trip to the 1974 World Cup.

Jose Castillo headed Bolivia in front in the 49th minute before Luciano Figueroa (good enough, it seems, for Argentina but not Birmingham City) and Luciano Galletti scored twice in six minutes.

Play better – and win!

"You can have difficulties such as heat, cold, snow, rain, wind, a bad pitch or high altitude, but the most important thing is to play better than the opposition, and if you play better, you have a better chance of winning," said Pekerman. "I insist that you mustn't forget the football, it's the most important thing."

Four days later, a Hernan Crespo header broke the stubborn resistance of **Colombia**, reduced to 10 men with the sending-off of Fabian Vargas just before half-time. The Colombians, who had just drawn 0-0 away to Venezuela in steamy Maracaibo, have certainly shored up their defence, keeping six clean sheets in nine qualifiers since Reinaldo Rueda replaced Francisco Maturana as coach. However, they have scored only twice in their last six outings.

Venezuela, trying to reach their first World Cup, were plagued by injuries and suspensions for the Colombia match and the 3-1 defeat in Bolivia that followed.

Brazil complained of the heat as they struggled to a 1-0 win at home to Peru (the four o'clock kick-off time was engineered by Brazilian television) but then produced a much-improved performance as they drew 1-1 against **Uruguay** in Montevideo. The latter game, a superb match, was played at a furious pace, although Brazil's No 9 could not keep up and lumbered through the game. It was Ronaldo's third consecutive stinker for his country and even prompted suggestions that he should be dropped. "If I have to take him off, I will," said coach Carlos Alberto Parreira. "But I think I ought to keep him on the field for everything that he has done."

Brian Homewood

Foot first…Olexiy Bielik aims to nick the ball off the head of Denmark's Thomas Helveg during Ukraine's win in Kiev

France struggle, Ukraine dream on

EUROPE

FRANCE'S FAILURE TO beat Switzerland and Israel in their latest two qualifiers means they now face a struggle to qualify from **Group 4**, where four teams – the French and Israel, both on 10 points, Switzerland and the Republic of Ireland on nine points – are in contention.

France's inability to score goals at home – the 0-0 draw with Switzerland was the third goalless qualifier at Stade de France out of three – continues to hold them back in what should have been a comfortable group.

The French now face potentially troublesome away games against Ireland in September and Switzerland in October. By contrast, the Irish look well-placed to qualify. They have home games against all three of their closest rivals, as well as trips to the Faroe Islands and Cyprus. Israel, after snatching a 1-1 draw with France, will be confident: they still have to play the Faroese home and away.

Ukraine have kept their commanding three-point lead in **Group 2**, the toughest of the European section, after a hard-fought 1-0 win over Denmark in Kiev. The Ukrainians have to travel to play second-placed Greece in June, but are on course to qualify for their first major tournament.

The Danes face missing out on a major finals for the first time in more than a decade. They now need good results in the games away to Turkey in September and home to Greece in October to revive their challenge for the runners-up spot.

European champions Greece have recovered from their poor start to the campaign thanks to wins over Georgia and Albania. Their next two games, away to Turkey on June 4 and home to Ukraine four days later, could go a long way to deciding the outcome of the group.

In **Group 1**, Holland continue to make progress under coach Marco Van Basten. Their victories over Romania and Armenia kept them top, a point ahead of the Czech Republic, though they still have to host third-placed Romania in June and travel to face the Czechs in October.

Portugal lead **Group 3** but only on goal difference from Slovakia, the sides having drawn 1-1 in Bratislava. The Portuguese host Slovakia in June before potentially tricky matches away to Russia in September and home to Latvia in October.

Yartsev quits Russia

Russia's problems continue. A 1-1 draw in Estonia proved the final straw for coach Georgi Yartsev, who resigned rather than be fired by newly-elected federation chief Vitaly Mutko. Yartsev was never likely to last long following the 7-1 thrashing by Portugal last October. However, the Russians, who Mutko hinted could now be coached by a foreigner, are only three points behind the Portuguese and Slovakia. They have home and away games against Latvia in June and August, followed by a home encounter with Portugal in September and a visit to Slovakia in October.

Italy look set to win **Group 5** after their 2-0 victory over Scotland in Milan thanks to two free-kick goals from Andrea Pirlo. Slovenia and Norway are both four points behind the Italians, while Belarus, who host Slovenia in June and Norway in their final match in October, are also in contention for the play-off spot.

Group 6 is a straight fight between England and Poland, who could both qualify automatically; the two best runners-up in the European groups also go direct to the finals, avoiding the play-offs. England's final game, at home to Poland in October, is likely to decide who tops the group.

Austria, winners home and away over Wales, still have hopes of finishing second; they visit Poland in September and England in October.

Serbia & Montenegro have the edge over Spain in **Group 7** after the two teams drew 0-0 in Belgrade. The pair meet again in September.

Lithuania, the group's surprise team, are worth keeping an eye on. They travel to Spain in June and Serbia & Montenegro in September, but finish with three home games – against Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia & Montenegro and Belgium.

The Belgians have been the real disappointment of the group but revived their fortunes a little with a 4-1 home win over Bosnia-Herzegovina and a 2-1 victory away to San Marino. The latter was a struggle, however, with the win secured, by defender Daniel Van Buyten, only after the hosts had equalised.

Croatia are top of **Group 8**, a point ahead of Sweden, after comfortable wins over Iceland and Malta. But they face a tough second half of the campaign: four away matches and a home encounter with the Swedes, who won 3-0 against Bulgaria in Sofia and look the better bet to finish on top.

Gavin Hamilton

QUALIFYING ROUND-UPS

Deaths and crowd violence eclipse Iran's double win

ASIA

Kicking off...North Korean players run to confront the referee during the Iran game after he turned down a penalty appeal. Nam Song-chol (No 16) was later sent off

THE DEATHS OF six fans in a stampede at Tehran's Azadi stadium and serious crowd trouble in Pyongyang overshadowed the latest rounds of Asia's World Cup qualifying tournament. Both ties involved **Iran**, who, on the field, edged closer to securing a berth in Germany with back-to-back wins over Asian champions Japan and North Korea.

FIFA is launching an investigation into the incidents at the Azadi stadium, which was filled beyond its 100,000 capacity for Iran's meeting with Group B leaders Japan. As well as the six deaths, 35 fans were injured in the crush that followed the game.

On the pitch, Bayern Munich striker Vahid Hashemian scored both goals in Iran's 2-1 win.

Five days later, Branko Ivankovic's side won 2-0 away to **North Korea**, thanks to an own goal by An Yong-hak, who turned in a Mehdi Mahdavikia effort, and a second by midfielder Javad Nekounam.

But when Syrian referee Mohammed Kousa correctly turned down a late penalty appeal for the home side, the North Koreans surrounded the official, pushing and shoving him while missiles rained down from the crowd. When the five-minute melee subsided, Nam Song-chol was sent off and, at the end, the referee, his assistants and the Iran players were unable to leave the pitch for 20 minutes as objects were hurled from the stands.

Lucky Japan

Iran now lead Group B by a point from **Japan**, who struggled to beat Bahrain 1-0 five days after defeat in Tehran. Japan coach Zico went into the game with his job on the line after a run of poor performances, but Bahrain frustrated the unimaginative hosts. Japan were only rescued by a late own goal after Mohamed Salmeen, attempting to clear Tsuneyasu Miyamoto's header, miscued and the ball bobbled into the net.

German coach Wolfgang Sidka, at the **Bahrain** helm for a second time after Srecko Juricic quit at the start of March, began with a 2-1 win in North Korea. Hussain Ali scored both the visitors' goals.

In Group A, 2002 World Cup semi-finalists **South Korea** put their campaign back on track with a 2-1 home victory over Uzbekistan after a surprise 2-0 loss away to **Saudi Arabia**. The Saudis went into the game, in Dammam, having drawn 1-1 with the Uzbeks but were expected to be easy prey for the Koreans. However, goals from Saud Khariri and Yasser Al-Qahtani (penalty) left the visitors – 2-0 winners over Kuwait in their opening group game – in a spot of trouble.

But goals from Lee Young-pyo and Lee Dong-gook dispatched the Uzbeks, for whom Alexander Geinrikh scored a consolation.

The Saudis, meanwhile, were held to a 0-0 draw in **Kuwait** to slip to second in the group, with the Kuwaitis third after a 2-1 win over **Uzbekistan**.

The Uzbeks' poor form, which has come despite their squad featuring a number of Russian Premier League players, led to the sacking of German coach Jurgen Gede after just three months in charge.

The top two teams in each group qualify automatically for Germany 2006 while the two third-placed teams play off to decide who faces the fourth-placed CONCACAF side for a finals berth.

Michael Church

Ole...Borgetti celebrates putting Mexico ahead

Mexico take revenge

CONCACAF

MEXICO AVENGED THEIR 2002 World Cup finals elimination by the **United States** with a 2-1 win at the Azteca stadium. Two goals in three minutes, by Jared Borgetti and Brazil-born midfielder Antonio Naelson, effectively settled the game by half-time. Eddie Lewis pulled one back in the second half but the Mexicans should have won more emphatically.

The home-based US players spent three weeks training in Colorado Springs, at a similar altitude to Mexico City, but it did not prepare them for the midday heat and air pollution.

Three days later, Mexico were held 1-1 in **Panama**. Ramon Morales gave Mexico the lead but Luis Tejada equalised 15 minutes from time. By then, Mexico were down to 10 men, Pavel Pardo having been sent off for punching Armando Gun.

USA bounced back by beating **Guatemala** 2-0 in Birmingham, with goals by Eddie Johnson and Steve Ralston. That ended a good start by the Guatemalans, who, like Panama and **Trinidad & Tobago**, have never been to a World Cup. Four days earlier, Guatemala thrashed Trinidad 5-1, Carlos Ruiz and Dwight Pezzarossi each scoring twice.

Costa Rica needed a 90th-minute Roy Myrie goal to beat Panama 2-1 in a match played behind closed doors in San Jose following crowd trouble in their 2-1 defeat by Mexico in February. The Ticos then held Trinidad & Tobago 0-0 in Port-of-Spain, a result that cost both coaches their jobs. The Soca Warriors fired Bertille St Clair, replacing him with ex-Holland coach Leo Beenhakker, while Costa Rica kicked out Colombian Jorge Luis Pinto.

After three rounds, Mexico lead with seven points from the United States (6), Guatemala and Costa Rica (4), Panama (2) and Trinidad & Tobago (1). The top three qualify directly for the finals.

Brian Homewood

Drogba keeps Ivorians top

AFRICA

IVORY COAST REMAIN Africa's form team as they won a fifth qualifying match out of six to stretch their lead in **Group 3**.

Civil war has ruined a previously prosperous economy and society in the west African country, but the national team are defying the strife at home by continuing to keep ahead of a formidable chasing pack.

Chelsea forward Didier Drogba, injured at the time of Ivory Coast's last World Cup match, returned to score twice as the Elephants beat Benin 3-0 to go four points clear of Cameroon and five ahead of Egypt. With four matches remaining, the Ivorians are well on course to reach their first World Cup finals.

Ivory Coast is so turbulent that national coach Henri Michel opts to live in Lebanon, his wife's home country. His players all come from European clubs, so the situation on the ground has little impact on the side's footballing fortunes.

Cameroon only secured a 2-1 home win over 10-man Sudan after substitute Achille Webo scored in the final minute. It was a far from convincing start for the Indomitable Lions' new Portuguese coach, Artur Jorge.

Egypt's 4-1 home win over Libya was marred by violence from visiting fans before the game.

But that paled into insignificance with the outbreak of anarchy in the Malian capital Bamako after the hosts lost 2-1 to Togo. Mali, bottom of **Group 1**, hoped to salvage something from a dismal campaign but conceded two goals in the last 10 minutes. This sparked pandemonium, which is likely to bring severe sanction from FIFA.

Pitch invasion

Souleymane Mamam's late winner prompted a pitch invasion by furious Malian fans and the mayhem quickly spread to the city, where shops were looted and cars burned. Both teams were barricaded in their dressing-rooms for hours before receiving a military escort out of the stadium. Mali striker Frederic Kanoute received death threats from an angry mob, who blamed him for wasting several chances.

Togo's win kept them joint top with Senegal and Zambia and proved they are now real contenders under former Nigeria World Cup captain Stephen Keshi.

El Hadji Diouf returned to Senegal's side and scored twice in the 6-1 rout of Liberia in Dakar, while Zambia marched on with a 2-0 home win over Congo.

Tunisia topped Senegal's tally by hitting seven goals – four from Brazil-born Francileudo dos Santos – at home to Malawi in **Group 5**. The Tunisians still trail leaders Morocco by four points, though they have a game in hand, after Zaki Badou's side beat 10-man Guinea 1-0 in Rabat. Celtic's Bobo Balde was sent off just before the break.

Nigeria took over at the top of **Group 4** by beating Gabon 2-0, while Angola lost their unbeaten record, going down 2-0 in Zimbabwe. Nwankwo Kanu set up Nigeria's first goal then scored the second after coming on as a second-half substitute.

South Africa were listless at home to Uganda but a 2-1 win allowed them to extend their lead in **Group 2** since Ghana could only draw 1-1 in DR Congo. Surprisingly, Cape Verde Islands are now Bafana Bafana's closest challengers after their first ever away World Cup qualifying win, 2-1 over Burkina Faso.

If the Cape Verdians can beat South Africa in June they will top the group, setting up a potential fairytale. Only the five group winners qualify for the finals.

Mark Gleeson

Elephants' charge...two-goal Didier Drogba takes on two Benin defenders during Ivory Coast's 3-0 win

Disaster...millions witnessed a spectacle of murderous, hooligan malice

Heysel's legacy

Lessons have been learned from a unique football horror story

HEYSEL. One word that summons a range of emotions. This was not football's worst stadium disaster. Other incidents have brought greater carnage, both before and since. But in just about every other tragedy, from Buenos Aires to Ibrox to Soweto, the blame has fallen on circumstances of accident or incompetence.

The reason the name of Heysel reverberates down the years is because worldwide television brought to millions the spectacle of murderous, hooligan malice. It was a unique football horror story.

The warning raised by the memory of Heysel owes nothing, either, to Liverpool and Juventus being drawn against each other in this season's Champions League. Indeed, concern expressed over their quarter-final meeting might be balanced against regret that such a rematch has not occurred sooner and more often.

Football folk, of course, tend to have short memories, which flicker on from one match to the next. Something of that short-term view had affected the perspective on Heysel. It had been turned into a story from a history book, a legend from long ago.

But Heysel was only 20 years back, less than a generation, and I recall it clearly.

Football changed after that European Cup Final and its 39 deaths. Gains for the greater good have been achieved in security, safety and spectator comfort. But they have been achieved at the expense of human trust.

Now, every match is organised to the lowest common, safety-first denominator. Back then, it was enough for UEFA to pick the venue and let the local organisers – federation, police, stadium officials – run the match.

UEFA came out of Heysel badly. It cried foul over the criminal charges levelled against general secretary Hans Bangerter and then banned the Belgian federation from staging any European finals in misdirected retribution.

Lessons have been learned since then, one hopes, for in the words of George Santayana: "Those who cannot learn from history are doomed to repeat it."

HAPPY BIRTHDAY, Boca Juniors. The Xeneixe have just celebrated their centenary with a giant party. Diego Maradona had promised to attend but in the end was notable merely by his absence. He had forgotten, apparently, that he was pre-booked to attend one of his daughter's 18th birthday celebrations on the same day.

NEWCASTLE UNITED went down the pragmatic route when chairman Freddy Shepherd and manager Graeme Souness decided not to part with punch-up partners Lee Bowyer and Kieron Dyer (above). After all, what's an ethic between friends when there might be an FA Cup Final, never mind a UEFA Cup Final, to win?

Has Michel got his timing wrong?

DANIEL COHN-BENDIT, former French Sports Minister, is demanding an 'Anti-Franz Alliance' to promote Michel Platini's UEFA presidential candidacy and block Herr Beckenbauer.

Not that *Der Kaiser* has yet said he will run. The German federation has provided a premature vote of confidence but we all know what they are worth. All Beckenbauer says is that he will consider his position if and when Lennart Johansson confirms his retirement.

Platini, it seems, may have gone out too early. For one thing, no one yet knows when the election for Johansson's successor will take place.

Although UEFA has a congress scheduled for spring 2006, the election could be postponed so that the European federation, like FIFA, can shift the presidential poll out of World Cup year.

Plenty of wily committee men will also be throwing their hats into the ring: men like Turkey's Senes Erzik and Holland's Mathieu Sprengers, who know far more about building election-winning alliances than Platini, a comparative newcomer.

The Frenchman's problem is that he appears to want to turn back the clock to a time when the purity of sport was valued above its commercial contracts. This is idealistic and worthy but unlikely to cut much ice with federations grown fat on the largesse of Nyon.

Nothing new under Italian sun

LAST SUMMER Fiorentina were promoted from Serie C to Serie A under the emergency expansion necessary to resolve all the legal arguments over promotion from Serie B.

Fiorentina were jumped a division – having had to start over following bankruptcy only in 2002 – for "reasons of sporting merit".

The fact that Florence is a large city and major commercial centre, and that the club draw big crowds away and fill an imposing stadium of their own, may also have played a part, of course.

However, the reasoning was merely echoing the manner in which fascist politicians created the first unified Italian top division in 1929 – when Napoli and Triestina were included on similar grounds.

The source is *Football and Fascism* by Simon Martin (Berg, £16.99), a fascinating academic study of the context in which *Calcio* was taken down its particular administrative and structural route in the 1920s and 1930s.

Carlos Alberto diatribe misses the target

Owen goal...Carlos Alberto

FLEET STREET'S FINEST usually steer clear of the visiting manager's press conference after an England game. They prefer sifting their own opinions while waiting for Sven Goran Eriksson to sidle in for his diplomatic debriefing. But any who skipped the diatribe launched by Azerbaijan's Carlos Alberto Torres after his side's 2-0 defeat in Newcastle missed a treat.

Carlos Alberto is no shrinking violet. Brazil's 1970 World Cup-winning captain has done his time pontificating to camera back in Brazil down the years.

Indeed, he adopted the role of pundit rather than manager as he pulled up his chair and launched into his assault on what he believed to have been the words of Michael Owen.

There was as much chance of stopping him in full flow as Italy had of stopping him volley that magnificent fourth goal in the 1970 World Cup Final.

Carlos Alberto had been upset by reports that England would score eight goals or more against Azerbaijan – like Poland had the previous Saturday – and that Owen would emulate Gallowgate hero Malcolm Macdonald's five-goal extravaganza against Cyprus.

Wrongly ascribing these boasts to Owen rather than an excited media, Carlos Alberto let fly. Owen, he said, was "a midget" worthy only to "wash Beckham's boots" and it was no surprise that the striker was stuck week after week on the substitutes' bench at Real Madrid. And so on.

A day later, apprised of the misunderstanding, Carlos Alberto apologised. But he will be remembered for his brief Azeri trusteeship long after moving on when the World Cup campaign ends in the autumn.

Everton's error

ALL THE SIGNS suggest that Everton took the wrong gamble in biting off Real Madrid's hands for the £2million offered for Danish midfielder Thomas Gravesen in mid-January.

Manager David Moyes justified the sale on the grounds that Everton would have received nothing had they waited until the end of the season, when Gravesen's contract expired.

This suggests Everton did not expect to remain up in a Champions League qualifying position. After all, would Gravesen have chosen to leave with Everton due to appear in next season's Champions League? Doubtful.

Everton won only two of their first nine League games without Gravesen, a run that included defeat in the Merseyside derby. Worse still, by early April it was Liverpool who were snapping at their heels for the fourth and final Champions League place.

Slipping out of that zone could cost Everton a minimum £10m. That, perhaps, will prove to have been Gravesen's true value.

Quickly missed...Everton have struggled to win games following Gravesen's departure

WS WORLD SOCCER GLOBAL VIEW Paul Gardner

Let's have the strong, silent type

Referees should be seen and not heard

WE'LL START WITH what is known as a break in the action. The game is in its 67th minute, and Charlton's Francis Jeffers, having just been solidly kicked by Manchester City's Richard Dunne, is on the ground being attended to. Not much going on, then – but the TV camera zooms in on an interesting little episode.

Here we have City's Robbie Fowler getting up close to referee Rob Styles, leaning forward and whispering in his ear. Fowler then backs off, but Styles beckons him back and does his own bit of whispering into Fowler's ear.

No audio, of course, so the exchanged confidences remain a mystery. Commentator Paul Walsh jokingly suggests that Fowler is warning Styles that Jeffers is "a bit of a diver".

Maybe he was saying that. In which case, someone from Charlton missed a chance to inform Styles that Dunne could be seen as "a bit of a thug".

This raises a serious question. Should a referee be exchanging whispered remarks with a player during a game? For that matter, should a referee be doing any sort of chatting with players during a game?

The obvious problem is that such exchanges are liable to be misunderstood. This is particularly true in internationals, where the language barrier applies. A player from Team A seen chatting happily away with the referee on the field before the game will probably raise the suspicions of Team B if none of its members speaks the referee's language.

So you wonder should the referee have any oral exchanges with players on the field, other than the ones that he initiates to get his decisions across? I'll take it a stage further – are even those communications necessary?

It is a noticeable part of the English refereeing style to talk to players. The players don't like toffee-nosed robot referees, they like a human being they can talk to. Or should that be, a referee they can reason with?

I would rate Graham Poll as the champion chatterer. I would love to know what he says to players during these prolonged little talks. I assume he's explaining why he has or has not made a decision. But where in the rules does it say he should do that?

Why should any explanation be necessary? Professional players are supposed – no, required – to know the rules of the game. Players are not permitted to protest, either by word or gesture, against a referee's decision – the rules say they must be cautioned if they do. But they argue frequently, and rarely see a yellow card.

The chatty referee seems to use his tongue mostly in situations where he is being lenient with a player – giving him a verbal caution rather than a card. I can find nothing in the rules that supports that approach. All it does is to allow the player an extra foul, or maybe two, before the required punishment is visited on him. Possibly that may turn out well, if the player decides to behave, but it is not in conformity with the rules.

'Referees' chats with players during games are likely to be misunderstood'

Poll's technique strikes me as being highly questionable. What on earth is there to chat about when Wayne Rooney, or any player, unleashes a deluge of foul language?

As the game gets more and more serious, the human touch gets more and more dangerous. I find it impossible to side with Jose Mourinho's provocative approach to this matter, but he raises a point – namely, is the day of the sociable referee over and done with?

Should a referee be talking to anyone from either team at a game site? A nod maybe, a smile, a terse hello, and that should be it. Actually that needs to be turned around – it is the coaches who need to be told not to approach referees. An obvious requirement I should have thought, but one that Mourinho seems to think is not observed.

So obvious, in fact, that UEFA doesn't bother to lay down any rules about it. UEFA's "General Terms and Conditions for Referees" contains no specific instruction about who referees should converse with at games. Nor do the regulations have anything to say about who is, or is not, allowed to enter the referee's changing-room.

Obviously, it is left to the common sense and professionalism of both referees and coaches to see that nothing untoward occurs. That approach may no longer be enough. When the stakes are high, suspicions are likely to be high too.

Sadly, Anders Frisk has fallen victim to those suspicions. He did nothing wrong yet was suffocated by an evil fog of suspicion. It is not a happy thought, but we are heading towards a situation requiring rules that totally isolate a referee from contact with the teams at game sites.

Button it...Graham Poll lays down the law to Manchester United's Gabriel Heinze

Ground for complaint...South African football as yet has no stadiums to match rugby arenas such as Kings Park in Durban

The Phillips effect

The ex-English FA man is leading a revolution in South African football

THERE IS A certain irony in the fact that the man charged with restructuring the South African Premier League and making it financially viable is the same man who played a major role in commercialising English football 20 years ago.

The irony lies in the fact that when Trevor Phillips negotiated the Football League's title sponsorship with Barclays in 1985, the bank was desperate for an image makeover after a prolonged campaign against its involvement in apartheid South Africa.

Phillips had joined the Football League as commercial director from pharmaceutical giant Glaxo earlier that year and used his business brain to reinvigorate a game tainted by hooliganism and suffering from falling attendances. Seven years later football's new commercialism found its ultimate expression in the formation of the FA Premier League, and Phillips joined the Football Association, where he stayed until 1996 before leaving for South Africa.

When Phillips returned there in 2002 after a two-year absence the state of the game looked distressingly familiar. The League was in debt to the tune of more than £5million, and although hooliganism has never been an issue for South African football, the shadow of the 2001 Ellis Park disaster hung over the game.

Three years on, however, the Premier Soccer League has paid off its debts and is turning over £13m a year. Phillips claims the PSL is now "the richest and best-organised league on the African continent".

On a recent visit to London Phillips told *World Soccer* about some of the challenges facing the game in South Africa. "One of the biggest problems we have is the wall-to-wall coverage of European football on television," he said. Because South Africa is in the same time zone as most of Europe, live European matches clash with domestic fixtures and the pay-TV channel Supersports shows six live European matches every weekend.

'The PSL is the richest and best-organised league on the African continent'

Trevor Phillips

Phillips says that domestic television earnings are seriously impeded by the government's policy that the PSL must sell its TV rights to the state-owned SABC. He adds that the policy means "minority sports like cricket and rugby enjoy much higher rights values".

Phillips believes that the PSL should set up its own pay-TV channel to broadcast matches, but subscriptions would need to be kept to a level that black football fans can afford, say £8 per month.

Another problem facing the South African game is the absence of football-specific stadiums. Phillips hopes that the award of the 2010 World Cup will go some way to resolving the issue, with the training centres being converted to 15,000 to 20,000-capacity, football-only stadiums after the tournament. "Whatever the legacy of the World Cup, it is imperative that it is a legacy for soccer, not rugby," he says.

Phillips recalls that when he first arrived in South Africa he found football had suffered from decades of under-investment and was plagued by political expediency.

By negotiating new sponsorship deals and addressing the TV rights issue, Phillips has gone some way to countering the legacy of under-investment. He knows, however, that politics will determine whether the 2010 World Cup will bring stability and growth to South Africa's No 1 sport.

No one can doubt Phillips' commercial acumen, and any man whose first employers in football were Ken Bates and Robert Maxwell and who survived the turmoil of the Premier League breakaway must also possess a fair amount of political savvy.

He will certainly need those political skills if he is going to be successful in putting the country's football on a firm footing for the future and balance the needs of the club owners, the South African FA, the government, the fans and white corporate South Africa.

The feeling is that if anyone can, Trevor Phillips can, and world football should hope he succeeds.

Simon Banks

WHSmith

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Hooliganism shames World Cup hosts

GERMANY

Fire-starters...German fans light flares in the seats at the Celje stadium under the gaze of the Slovenian police

SO FAR, IT'S BEEN the sort of year every World Cup host dreads. Hard on the heels of the revelations of referee Robert Hoyzer that he fixed matches on behalf of a Croat betting syndicate, the image of the German game was further besmirched by the hooliganism that marred the national team's 1-0 friendly win in Slovenia.

Tales of German fans running amok before, during and after the international in Celje was just the sort of publicity that World Cup organising committee president Franz Beckenbauer and his team could have done without only 15 months away from the big kick-off.

While Beckenbauer claimed the Slovenians had underestimated the threat of trouble, there could be no excuse for the litany of lawlessness committed by a minority of German supporters: shops and cars vandalised, seats ripped out at the stadium, flares thrown on to the pitch, clashes with police and locals. All told, 45 Germans were arrested, joined in the cells for the night by 20 Slovenians.

In normal circumstances, the post-match chatter would have centred on the winning goal from Koln youngster Lukas Podolski, the fine stops of keeper Oliver Kahn and the shortcomings of Germany's experimental 4-3-3 formation. Not this time, though. The only story was the outbreak of violence and the German federation's fulsome apology to the Slovenians.

"This is our shame," said German federation chief Gerhard Mayer-Vorfelder, who himself was jostled by fans as he left the stadium. "It's a catastrophe. I'm appalled to see such senseless hate and destruction. Three days of hard drinking played its part."

The German authorities were quick to react to the hooliganism. Alfred Sengle, the federation's head of security, promised that crowd-control measures for the World Cup would be reviewed, while the country's Interior Minister, Otto Schily, reiterated his zero-tolerance policy for miscreants. "To prevent any possibility of violence, the hooligans will be kept away from the stadia and the city centres," he said. "To this end, the federal and state governments will exhaust all legal means.

"The yobs who went to Slovenia to cause mayhem are a disgrace. The majority of our fans are peaceful and love football. That's the sort of World Cup finals we want. The police will make sure those who want to fight don't wreck the most wonderful football festival in the world."

But within days, there were crowd disturbances at no fewer than three German Second Division matches. In Essen, home supporters fought with Dynamo Dresden fans and police; there was similar disorder at the Aachen-Rot Weiss Erfurt fixture; and at Erzgebirge Aue, a firework thrown from the crowd landed by Energie Cottbus coach Petrik Sander, who was forced to spend the night in hospital suffering from trauma.

As for the Bundesliga, the balance of power remains with Schalke and Bayern Munich. Schalke's 1-0 home victory over their championship rivals took them three points clear at the top. The goal, from an expertly-taken free-kick by Brazilian Lincoln, was the only note of finesse in a frenetic, untidy encounter. A week later, however, Schalke were hustled out of their stride in a 2-1 loss at promoted Mainz, while Bayern made up the lost ground thanks to a 3-1 home victory against seemingly doomed Hansa Rostock.

Whoever wins the title, one thing is for sure: Bayern and Schalke will keep up the mind games until the end. "Class will make the difference in this championship, and we definitely have the class," asserted Bayern general manager Uli Hoeness. Schalke attacker Gerald Asamoah retorted: "We've beaten Bayern twice this season and anyone who does that has to be in line for the title."

Nick Bidwell

Bad start for Blind

On the Mark...Van Bommel is ecstatic after completing his hat-trick in PSV's 4-0 win over Ajax in Amsterdam

HOLLAND

DANNY BLIND HAD a worst-case scenario start as Ajax coach, seeing his new charges lose 4-0 at home to leaders PSV Eindhoven. It was Ajax's biggest ever League defeat in Amsterdam and left them 14 points off the top and seven behind AZ Alkmaar in second place. This means they are almost certain to miss out on a Champions League berth.

Blind, a former Ajax captain and recently head of the club's youth academy, succeeded Ronald Koeman, who resigned after Ajax's elimination from the UEFA Cup.

Although Martin Jol (Tottenham) and Henk ten Cate (Barcelona assistant coach) were candidates, the board stuck to its promise that Blind would be offered the job whenever Koeman's tenure ended.

With the title well out of reach, Blind's only hope of silverware is in the Cup, in which Ajax face Willem II in the semi-finals and PSV meet Feyenoord.

Skipper Mark Van Bommel was the star of PSV's victory, hitting a hat-trick to boost the likelihood of a summer move to Barcelona or Milan. But despite his side's domestic dominance, national coach Marco Van Basten ignored PSV's Andre Ooijer and Jan Vennegoor of Hesselink for the recent World Cup qualifiers, also going without Edgar Davids, Patrick Kluivert, Clarence Seedorf, Pierre Van Hooijdonk and Roy Makaay.

Instead, Van Basten called up Ajax youngsters Ryan Babel and Hedwiges Maduro. At the start of the season striker Babel was still playing in Ajax's youth team, while midfielder Maduro had played only four first-team matches. However, Van Basten's decision was vindicated when Babel scored in a 2-0 win in Romania.

The team beat Armenia by the same score at home four days later, meaning Van Basten had set a new record by remaining undefeated in his first nine matches as Holland coach.

AZ winger Martijn Meerdink missed the chance to make his international debut after suffering a severe knee injury in training.

Van Hooijdonk has kept a promise to end his career with his first club, NAC Breda, agreeing to rejoin them from Fenerbahce in the summer.

Bottom club Den Bosch have sacked coach Henk Wisman and replaced him with assistants Jan Van Grinsven and Wim Van der Horst.

Klaas-Jan Droppert

SWITZERLAND

Roger charged with gross mismanagement

Marc Roger, the former president of Servette, has been arrested and charged with gross mismanagement after the club were declared bankrupt.

Servette, who have debts of £6.8million, have been expelled from this season's top division and face demotion to the inter-regional Liga 1. Players and club officials have begun legal action to recover the £5m they are owed in wages.

Champions Basle continue to lead the table but have suffered two bad defeats since the winter break. They lost 3-1 at St Gallen on the first day back and then 3-0 at Thun, who then rose to second place, overtaking Neuchatel Xamax, after beating Schaffhausen 1-0 away.

The national team held France to a goalless draw away and then beat Cyprus 1-0 at home to keep their World Cup qualifying hopes alive.

Ivar von Rulach

AUSTRIA

Clock ticking on Klagenfurt

FA president Friedrich Stickler has acknowledged that Austria faces a race against time to hang on to its Euro 2008 hosting rights, shared with Switzerland, because of delays on one of the stadiums. "We have to find a solution soon or the entire tournament might be taken from us," said Stickler, referring to the fact that the stadium due to be built in the southern city of Klagenfurt is still in its building contract awarding process with the completion date just over two years away.

The awarding process was

hampered when a newspaper illegally published a list of the bidding companies. Although an independent expert commission decided the awarding could continue, with the building contract eventually handed to Porr AG, a cartel of rival companies objected to the decision.

Hans Peter Haselsteiner, owner of the largest rival bidder, Strabag, launched an appeal, accusing the awarding commission of "profound irregularities and manipulation". Haselsteiner's best friend, former Freedom Party leader Jorg Haider, is governor of Carinthia province, of which Klagenfurt is capital, and has the final say on sports venues in the region.

All eight Euro 2008 venues must be completed by May 31, 2007, a deadline that has prompted Austria's Sports Minister, Karl Schweitzer, to suggest moving the matches pencilled in for Klagenfurt. St Polten, near Vienna, and Linz in Upper Austria have both indicated a willingness to fill the breach.

The national team did the double over Wales in the World Cup qualifiers, winning 2-0 in Cardiff and then 1-0 in Vienna, to stay in contention for a play-off place.

Harry Miltner

REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

Waterford take early lead

Waterford United were the surprise early leaders in the Premier Division, the only side to win both their first two games. Champions Shelbourne, who made a number of big-name signings during the close season, stumbled on the opening day, only managing a 1-1 draw at home to University College Dublin.

John Delaney, who took over as interim FAI chief executive following the departure of Fran Rooney, has now been handed the job on a permanent basis. Delaney was formerly the Association's treasurer.

Roy Keane and Stephen Carr were both booked during the 1-1 World Cup qualifying draw against Israel in Tel Aviv and will miss the return in Dublin on June 4.

Sean Creedon

LIECHTENSTEIN

Vaduz still clear

Vaduz stayed on course for automatic promotion to the Swiss top division by winning four of their first five Challenge League games after the winter break. The run put them seven points clear of nearest challengers Yverdon, who had two games in hand.

Meanwhile, Vaduz have loaned midfielder Fernando Ferrari to Swiss side Aarau and sold international Claudio Alabor to Eschen Mauren. The latter, Vaduz's Cup Final opponents, have signed another international, Christof Ritter, from Chur.

Graeme Crawford

Red wedge...Mpenza and Daerden celebrate a goal against Bosnia-Herzegovina

Anderlecht burst back

BELGIUM

ANDERLECHT NARROWED the gap on League leaders Club Brugge to six points without playing a game after finally winning the battle of the burst ball. The FA appeals committee recently annulled their 2-1 win over La Louviere in November after upholding a complaint by the losers that Anderlecht's first goal had been allowed to stand despite the ball having burst in mid-air before crossing the goalline. However, Anderlecht appealed against the annulment and during the hearing La Louviere withdrew their protest.

Club Brugge had led Anderlecht by 11 points, but that was reduced to nine after the leaders could only draw 0-0 at home to Lokeren while the challengers were beating FC Brussels 3-0 at home. Brugge's stalemate ended a record-breaking run of scoring in 50 home games in a row, spanning two years.

The national team improved their slim hopes of reaching the World Cup finals by thrashing Bosnia-Herzegovina 4-1 at home and then winning away to San Marino, though only 2-1.

Nicholas Harling

Hands on...Diego gets a shove from Bruno of Nacional during Porto's humiliating 4-0 defeat

Benfica profit as rivals slip

PORTUGAL

BENFICA, WHO LAST won the championship in 1994, opened up a six-point gap at the top in March after taking advantage of their rivals' poor form. Although the pragmatic style of Italian coach Giovanni Trapattoni has not impressed the fans, it is paying dividends, with the team going on a run of victories over Nacional, Gil Vicente and Vitoria Setubal.

Defending champions FC Porto lost 4-0 at home to Nacional – their worst defeat on their own turf for 30 years – and then went down 2-0 away to Sporting Lisbon.

That win for Sporting put them second on goal difference but highlighted their woeful inconsistency. They had lost their previous two games, 1-0 at Belenenses and 2-0 at home to lowly Penafiel, but shown good form in the UEFA Cup, beating Middlesbrough 4-2 on aggregate to reach the quarter-finals.

Portugal maintained their hopes of qualifying automatically for the World Cup finals by drawing 1-1 with Slovakia in Bratislava to stay joint top of Group 3.

Pedro Pinto

Sofia, so good

SWEDEN

THE NATIONAL TEAM moved a step closer to the World Cup finals with an emphatic 3-0 win over Bulgaria in Sofia. Although the hosts piled on the pressure in the first half, Sweden weathered the storm and hit back, securing victory with two goals from Freddie Ljungberg – one a splendid volley – and the other from Erik Edman. Skipper Olof Mellberg was the visitors' real hero, however, putting in a valiant performance in defence, especially during the initial Bulgarian onslaught.

After the game, coach Lars Lagerback stirred up a controversy by saying the best two current Swedish players are Henrik Larsson, a long-term injury casualty, and Ljungberg. "They are among the top 20 European players at the moment," the coach opined. When asked about Zlatan Ibrahimovic, Larsson's international strike partner, Lagerback said he put him "somewhere in Europe's top 50".

At home, Helsingborgs surprisingly let influential veteran midfielder Jesper Jansson move to Norway's Stabaek. The club had earlier lost perhaps their best player, midfielder Mattias Lindstrom, to Denmark's AaB Aalborg.

Pentti Hietanen

Captain Fantastic...Olof Mellberg, Sweden's defensive linchpin, foils Bulgaria striker Dimitar Berbatov during the 3-0 win

DENMARK

Fine run set to end

Denmark's proud run of qualification for major tournaments is under severe threat following a luckless World Cup defeat away to Group 2 leaders Ukraine in Kiev.

The 1-0 loss means the Danes, who have reached the last five major finals (European Championships and World Cups) and nine of the last 11, are now five points off even a play-off place for Germany 2006.

Denmark dominated for long spells but squandered a number of chances and went down to a 67th-minute Andrii Voronin strike.

Four days earlier the Danes won 3-0 at home to Kazakhstan with veteran striker Peter Moller scoring twice after a surprise recall.

Moller's club, FC Copenhagen, made the brightest start to the domestic League's spring campaign, beating both Midtjylland and Randers 4-0. However, they still trailed leaders Brondby by 12 points.

Jim Holden

NORWAY

Challengers share the spoils

Valerenga and Brann, two of the main likely challengers for the domestic title this year, shared the points after a 2-2 draw in Scandinavia's Royal League tournament.

Norwegian champions Rosenborg topped their Royal League group after drawing 2-2 away to FC Copenhagen then beating Malmo 2-0 at home.

Former Denmark coach Bo Johansson has taken the reins at Molde at the age of 63. He replaces Reidar Vagnes, who stood down

believing he could not fulfil his duties due to Achilles tendon injuries.

The national team were held to a goalless draw by Moldova in their March World Cup qualifier and now trail group leaders Italy by four points.

Sigurd Odegaard

ICELAND

Zero in Zagreb

The national side's slender hopes of reaching even the World Cup qualifying play-offs evaporated in the damp of a Zagreb night as they slumped to a 4-0 defeat.

Iceland, deprived of injured skipper Eidur Gudjohnsen, held out until just before half-time and were finished off by three goals in the last 20 minutes.

It left them rooted to the bottom of Group 8 with Malta, having taken only one point from five games.

Four days after the Zagreb debacle, Iceland ground out a 0-0 draw against a virtual Italy B team in a friendly in Padua. The visitors' Kari Arnason was sent off late on, just after coming on as a substitute.

Rab Christie

ESTONIA

TVMK off to a flyer

Last season's runners-up Tallinna VMK made a dream start to the new League campaign, winning their first four games, scoring 20 goals and conceding only two.

Flora Tallinn, the record champions, were trailing in fourth with only seven points, having sold or loaned out key players Erko Saviauk (to TVMK), Ragnar Klavan (Norway's Valerenga), Enar Jaager (Torpedo Moscow), Joel Lindpere (CSKA Sofia) and Kristen Viikmae (Norway's Fredrikstad) during the close season. In addition, Marko Kristal has retired.

Andres Must

LATVIA

Rush to Rubin

The number of Latvian internationals at Russian top division side Rubin Kazan has swelled to four. The most recent arrivals are Skonto Riga midfielder Orestas Buitkus and forward Vits Rimkus, currently on loan at another Russian side, Rostov, from Ventspils. They join keeper Aleksandrs Kolinko and midfielder Vitalijs Astafjevs.

Skonto have signed Cameroonian striker Claude Parfait Ngon from FK Riga and Georgian Under-21 defender Zaali Eliava from FC Tbilisi.

Andres Must

FINLAND

Frantic failure

The national team came away from the Czech Republic with nothing and with little chance of reaching Germany 2006 after a remarkable World Cup qualifier.

In a match packed with frantic action and almost perverse defensive lapses, Finland were 2-0 down at half-time, pulled back to 3-3 only to lose 4-3. They could have even won, with Shefki Kuqi having a powerful header superbly saved by Petr Cech with the score at 3-3. The Czechs counter-attacked for Vratislav Lokvenc to score the winner.

Jonatan Johansson, scorer of Finland's third goal, said: "This is the hardest defeat of my career. It's so cruel."

Pentti Hietanen

WALES

Time on Toshack's side

Most Welsh fans remain firmly behind national coach John Toshack after the double World Cup qualifying defeat by Austria, recognising he needs more time to bring his influence to bear.

Toshack took the reins from Mark Hughes with virtually all hope of qualifying for Germany 2006 virtually extinguished, and the 2-0 loss to Austria in Cardiff followed by a 1-0 defeat in Vienna put the finals definitely out of reach.

In the League, Total Network Solutions opened up an eight-point lead over defending champions Rhyl with four matches remaining.

Mel Thomas

Cruel defeat...Finland's Johansson

NORTHERN IRELAND

Portadown's Bad Friday

The championship is now a two-horse race between champions Linfield and Glentoran after Portadown's faltering challenge suffered a decisive blow on Good Friday. They surrendered a two-goal lead at home to third-from-bottom Ards to lose 3-2, the visitors' first League victory in 16 games.

National team manager Lawrie Sanchez has been given an extension to his contract until the end of 2007.

Roy Kitson

Pride restored under Smith

Tough times ahead...Walter Smith and assistant Ally McCoist look on from the dugout in the San Siro

SCOTLAND

SCOTLAND'S 2-0 World Cup qualifying defeat by Italy in Milan ended almost all hope of reaching the finals, but the side's performance in Walter Smith's first game in charge offered a silver lining.

The Scots, without injured forwards James McFadden and Paul Dickov, matched the Italians for large parts of the game and showed a desire and pride largely absent during the unsuccessful reign of Berti Vogts, Smith's predecessor.

At home, Rangers ensured they would not suffer a second successive trophyless season by beating Motherwell 5-1 in the League Cup Final.

Craig Bellamy, Celtic's loan signing from Newcastle, caused controversy in his first weeks at Parkhead, reportedly taunting Clyde players about their comparatively low wages during a Scottish Cup tie, then refusing to shake hands with Hibernian defender Gary Caldwell after a League game. However, the Wales striker also showed his worth, notably when hitting a hat-trick in the 3-2 win at Dundee United that put Celtic back on top of the table.

Alan Fairley

Not so fast...a FIFA official tries to stop Ersun Yanal going on the pitch to celebrate with his team after a goal against Georgia

Fatih on fire

TURKEY

TURKEY APPEAR TO have found their new striker – and not before time. Emerging from the shadow of veteran Hakan Sukur, Trabzonspor's Fatih Tekke led the way in scoring twice during the national team's 5-2 win away to Georgia to keep his country in contention for a World Cup finals place. The result, added to Turkey's 2-0 home victory over Albania four days before, put them third in Group 2, two points behind Greece in the play-off place.

Fatih's performance against Georgia, which made him the top Turkish scorer in the qualifiers, vindicated the much-criticised decision by coach Ersun Yanal to drop the misfiring but popular Hakan.

After a very shaky start to the qualifying campaign, Yanal is at last beginning to give shape and purpose to his squad. While keeper Rustu Recber won a record-equalling 101st cap against Georgia, he was flanked by a generally youthful squad. Schalke's 22-year-old midfielder Hamit Altintop fully justified his selection, having often been overlooked by Yanal's predecessor, Senol Gunes.

As well as the difficulties Yanal has faced in replacing old-timers such as Hakan and the poor World Cup start, he also came under scrutiny following an investigation into allegations of corruption during his time as Genclerbirligi coach.

But with that probe now called off and a brace of World Cup wins under his belt, Yanal has sounded more confident. "There's no question of my resignation," he said. "We are continuing on our way."

This is not to say that Turkey's game is anywhere near the level they need it to be to make an impact in the World Cup, as they did in 2002, should they qualify.

Senes Erzik, Turkey's FIFA executive committee member, was critical after the Albania game, saying the team's performance collapsed after they went 2-0 ahead. "We completely lost any harmony," he complained. "The football that was played satisfied no one, myself included."

But the Georgia game was much more positive, and gives Turkey more hope. For Yanal, it has to get better, but, until the end of March, it had looked a lot worse.

Suna Erdem

GREECE

Xanthi ask for rematch out of sympathy for opponents

Xanthi, in fourth place and on course to reach the UEFA Cup for the first time, have made a remarkable appeal for a drawn League match to be restaged because they felt bad that relegation-threatened opponents Kerkira had not taken all three points.

Corfu-based Kerkira, bottom of the table, had led 1-0 with just a few minutes remaining, but Stavros Lambriakos equalised for Xanthi from the penalty spot. Afterwards, the Xanthi board asked the federation for the match to be replayed, stating: "The one point for Xanthi does not mean anything. On the other hand, the three points for Corfu [Kerkira] may mean staying in the First Division."

The federation has yet to make a decision about the request.

Ironically, Xanthi have also complained in recent weeks about refereeing bias against them. The week before the Kerkira game, they lost 2-1 away to Halkidona after Lambriakos missed a late penalty which he had been ordered to retake for a third time. Lambriakos converted the first two attempts, only to be told to retake the kick each time because the referee said he had not blown his whistle.

Lou Economopoulos

SERBIA & MONTENEGRO

Spain held in Belgrade

The national team stayed on course for Germany 2006 with a 0-0 draw against Spain in Belgrade. Mateja Kezman came closest to breaking the deadlock early in the second half, but his close-range shot hit a post. Serbia & Montenegro have not conceded a goal for 547 minutes, since the 1-1 friendly draw away to Slovenia last August.

Partizan Belgrade failed to qualify for the UEFA Cup quarter-finals after losing 3-1 on aggregate to CSKA Moscow. Nevertheless, it was the best European campaign for a club from the country for 13 years.

In the domestic League, Partizan, still unbeaten after 19 games, took a two-point lead at the top after beating Smederevo 4-1 while Red Star Belgrade could only draw 0-0 at Zemun.

Red Star president Dragan Dzajic, who quit last autumn, but whose resignation was not accepted by the board, announced he would return in April, saying he had taken time out to recover from a back complaint.

Vladimir Novak

BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA

Belgium defeat puts Sliskovic on trial

There have been calls for the dismissal of national coach Blaz Sliskovic after his side's 4-1 World Cup qualifying defeat away to Belgium and then 1-1 home draw with Lithuania four days later. The results were particularly bitter since Bosnia's previous results in Group 7 – a 1-1 draw with Spain and 0-0 draw with Serbia & Montenegro, both at home – had raised hopes that the team could finally qualify for a major finals.

One of the chief criticisms of Sliskovic is that he is only a part-time national team boss, spending the rest of his time as coach of Hajduk Split, the Croatian League leaders. Sliskovic has hit back by saying any Bosnia boss would be hampered by the poor quality of the domestic League.

Zdravko Reic

MACEDONIA

Georgievski faces drug ban

Jordan Georgievski, the Rabotnicki Kometal and Macedonia goalkeeper, is facing a six-month ban after testing positive for the illegal substance salbutamol. The federation has also announced that Pobeda midfielder Blagojce Gorgioski will be suspended after failing to show for a drug test.

New national coach Slobodan Santrac stayed true to his threat to ignore players not in regular first-team action by leaving out stalwarts Artim Sakiri (West Bromwich), Igor Mitreski (Moscow Spartak) and Goran Stavrevski (Diyarbakirspor) for the recent World Cup qualifier against Romania, a 2-1 defeat. There were recalls for long-term absentees Robert Petrov (Lokomotiv Plovdiv), Boban Grncarov (Metalurh Donetsk) and Goran Maznov (Rabotnicki Kometal).

Pobeda sports director Mile Hadzi-Risteski has died in a car accident in Skopje. The 27-year-old was the son of Macedonian federation president Haralampie Hadzi-Risteski.

Michel Stojmanovski

ISRAEL

Late shows keep national team on course

Israel scored in the dying minutes of their two March World Cup qualifiers, both at home, to earn 1-1 draws against the Republic of Ireland and France. The results, which kept Israel joint top of Group 4, belied their FIFA ranking of 52nd and confirmed the extent of the team's resurgence under coach Avraham Grant.

While Israel never looked likely to get the better of Ireland, most local pundits felt that the French were lucky to go home with a point.

Both equalisers were scored by Arab players – Abbas Suan against Ireland and Walid Badir against France – a fact celebrated by the media in the hope that it might prove a symbol of unity in a country beset by religious tensions.

Derek Fattal

CROATIA

Dog days at Dinamo

Seven-times champions Dinamo Zagreb have missed out on this season's six-team championship play-offs and must battle against the drop in the relegation pool.

Dinamo have been in crisis all season and could finish only seventh in the 12-team top division.

End of the line…Ilija Loncarevic

The club now face an uncertain future off the field, too, after the resignation of vice-president Zdravko Mamic, who claims Dinamo owe him £2million because of his investment in new players and facilities.

Mamic was the club's undoubted powerbroker and hired and fired no fewer than four coaches this season as Dinamo stumbled through the regular League campaign. But the chopping and changing proved in vain as the club lost their final regular season match, 3-1 away to Slaven Belupo, to lose out on a top-six spot to crosstown rivals FC Zagreb.

The defeat spelt the end for coach Ilija Loncarevic, with Mamic deciding to quit himself a few days later.

Dinamo's troubles were not helped by selling Niko Kranjcar, the League's best player, to arch-rivals and leaders Hajduk Split in mid-season after he fell out with Loncarevic.

Zdravko Reic

MALTA

Sliema hold title challengers at bay

Sliema Wanderers moved closer to winning their third successive championship after holding two of the chasing pack – Birkirkara and Hibernians – to 1-1 draws at home and, in between, beating closest challengers Valletta 3-0 away. However, they sailed close to the wind in the drawn games, going behind in each and only equalising in the final minute on both occasions. League top scorer Ivan Woods salvaged the point against Birkirkara from the penalty spot, then hit two more goals in the defeat of Valletta. Under-21 defender Alex Muscat saved the day against Hibernians.

Sliema's cause was further helped when Valletta lost 2-1 at home to Birkirkara to go five points adrift.

Malta suffered their fourth defeat from five World Cup qualifiers when going down 3-0 to Croatia in Zagreb.

Domenico Aquilina

Friendly marred by violence

SLOVENIA

THE NATIONAL TEAM's recent home friendly against Germany in Celje was overshadowed by hooliganism involving visiting fans.

The trouble began when a contingent of about 400 started fighting among themselves. They then clashed with police and finally fought with Slovenian fans. Police made 65 arrests, 45 of them Germans. The visiting fans in custody were deported the day after the game.

Germany won the match 1-0 but Slovenia performed well and deserved a draw. The gate receipts of £690,000 were the highest for a single game staged in Slovenia.

Zdravko Reic

Tight squeeze…Arne Friedrich of Germany tries to find a way between Slovenia's Suad Filekovic and Nastja Ceh

Blokhin stays on to secure victory

UKRAINE

Leading by example...Andrii Voronin fights off Denmark's Brian Priske during the World Cup qualifier

THE NATIONAL TEAM took a big step towards World Cup qualification when recording a hard-fought 1-0 win over Denmark in Kiev. The victory, which kept Ukraine three points clear at the top of Group 2, was achieved despite a turbulent preparation period during which coach Oleh Blokhin temporarily quit.

Blokhin, also a member of parliament since 2003, stepped down two weeks before the game after a parliamentary commission questioned the legality of him holding two jobs at the same time. Under Ukrainian law, MPs are normally allowed to do only one.

Although the football federation accepted Blokhin's resignation, president Grigoriy Surkis successfully persuaded him to change his mind and sought a ruling on the dual employment issue from the Court of Appeal. During the hearing, Blokhin's lawyers said he considered his national team job to be a teaching role, which MPs are simultaneously allowed to fulfil, and that he did not receive payment for his football work. The court finally ruled that Blokhin could hold both jobs and he retook the national team reins six days before the Denmark game.

Andrii Voronin was the star of the show, scoring the goal and showing real leadership qualities in the absence of injured captain Andrii Shevchenko.

Metalurh Donetsk coach Slavoljub Muslin has resigned, citing family reasons, though a string of poor results in recent weeks may well have had some bearing. The Serb, who quit with the club in third place, has been replaced by Vitaliy Shevchenko, formerly with Saturn of Russia.

Former Kyiv Dynamo skipper Olexander Holovko has returned to Tavriya Simferopol, the club from which he joined Dynamo in 1991. Ex-CSKA Moscow and Russia defender Eugeniy Varlamov has joined Metalist Kharkiv.

Oleg Zadernovsky

RUSSIA

Zenit make hot start

Zenit St Petersburg were the quickest to warm up as the new League season got under way in sub-zero temperatures, becoming the only side to win their first two games to go top of the embryonic table. Their first victims were Dinamo Moscow, who were hammered 4-1 despite the presence of five new signings from the Portuguese League, including £5million Brazilian striker Derlei. Zenit then beat Alaniya 3-0 away.

The defeat in St Petersburg was a big blow for new Dinamo coach Oleg Romantsev, who won eight League titles with Moscow Spartak, and new owner Alexei Fedorychev. However, the expensively-assembled team rallied next time out, beating city rivals Torpedo 2-1 at home.

Spartak, who lost 2-0 at home to FC Moscow on the opening day, received a massive boost with the return to action of charismatic leader Yegor Titov following his 12-month drugs suspension. The 28-year-old midfielder was quick to remind the former champions of his value, scoring twice in a 3-0 home victory over Rubin Kazan.

New measures have been introduced to eradicate corruption or intimidation of referees. The officials are selected by computer just a day before matches and are accompanied by two armed security officers from that moment until the game is over.

CSKA Moscow's good showing in this season's UEFA Cup, getting to at least the quarter-finals, has ensured Russia will receive a second automatic group place in the 2006-07 Champions League.

Victor Gusev

ROMANIA

Victor loses first game back

National coach Victor Piturca came under heavy media fire after the 2-0 World Cup qualifying home defeat by Holland in his first match since retaking the reins.

Piturca was accused of favouring players from his former club, Steaua Bucharest, when they were not up to the task and failing to get his squad in the right frame of mind. The fact Philip Cocu put the Dutch ahead after just 37 seconds made Romania's task all the harder.

The team rallied away to Macedonia four days later, winning 2-1.

Piturca, who led Romania unbeaten into the Euro 2000 finals, took charge for the second time in December after Anghel

Glut then graft in double win

POLAND

THE 8-0 THRASHING of Azerbaijan in Warsaw was Poland's biggest ever World Cup qualifying win and raised expectations of another goal glut at home to Northern Ireland four days later. But although the Poles created many chances they had to wait until the 86th minute to score what proved the only goal. Maciej Zurawski's header kept his side within a point of Group 6 leaders England to maintain their high hopes of gaining at least a play-off place. Tomasz Frankowski, the domestic League top scorer, hit a hat-trick against Azerbaijan.

The League's spring programme kicked off amid controversy after three of the four richest clubs – the so-called 'G-4' – refused to wear the logo of new FA sponsor IDEA GSM, a mobile phone company. Wisla Krakow, Groclin Grodzisk and Legia Warsaw, coincidentally the top three in the League, claimed they had not been consulted about the £5million, three-and-a-half-year deal and that the nine per cent cut to agent company Sport Five was too high.

Only three of the first-day matches took place because of frozen pitches, prompting the FA to announce that all First Division clubs must install undersoil heating by spring 2007. Wisla, the defending champions, won their first two matches to open up a 10-point gap at the top.

Dariusz Kurowski

Hat-trick hero...Frankowski

No variety for Heinz

CZECH REPUBLIC

OUT-OF-FAVOUR Borussia Monchengladbach midfielder Marek Heinz has been denied the chance of playing the rest of the season on loan at Sparta Prague. The Czech League leaders hoped to sign Heinz despite the transfer window having closed by persuading Gladbach to temporarily cancel his contract, which runs until next year. However, the Bundesliga club refused to sanction the move after learning they would have no rights to Heinz if they did terminate his contract, for no matter how short a time.

Sparta, 18 points clear with 10 games to play, will now try to sign the national team player in the summer.

A late Vratislav Lokvenc goal brought the national team a 4-3 World Cup qualifying win over Finland in Teplice after having squandered a 3-1 lead. Heinz's lack of first-team action ruled him out while captain Tomas Galasek and striker Jan Koller were absent because of injury.

Lokvenc was again on target four days later in the 4-0 win in Andorra.

Sam Beckwith

Done it...Lokvenc hails his late winner

Iordanescu resigned in the wake of the disappointing 1-1 World Cup qualifying draw in Armenia.

Radu Timofte

SLOVAKIA

Artmedia increase lead

Record snowfalls meant the spring campaign kicked off two weeks late. When it did finally get under way, Artmedia Bratislava went three points clear at the top after drawing 0-0 at home to Spartak Trnava and then beating Banska Bystrica 3-1.

Champions Zilina were second after bouncing back from an unexpected 1-0 defeat at Banska Bystrica by demolishing top division newcomers Rimavska Sobota 5-0.

Former champions Inter Bratislava enjoyed a revival after an awful first half of the season, beating Rimavska Sobota 1-0 away and then Dubnica, who lay second at the winter break, 3-1 at home. The two wins pulled Inter off the bottom, ahead of Rimavska Sobota on goal difference.

Slovakia's impressive World Cup qualification campaign continued as they came from behind to beat Estonia 2-1 in a bitterly cold Tallinn and then held group favourites Portugal to a 1-1 draw in Bratislava after taking an early lead. The results kept Slovakia joint top of Group 3 with the Portuguese.

Pavol Stracansky

HUNGARY

Rajczi grabs a point

A late equaliser by substitute Peter Rajczi against Bulgaria kept Hungary in with a slim chance of qualifying for next year's World Cup. Stilian Petrov put the visitors ahead just after half-time but Hungary, without suspended captain Zoltan Gera, would not lie down and Rajczi, on for the influential Otto Vincze, smashed his shot home with five minutes left.

"We were missing so many key players but I was pleased with the way everyone fought," said Hungary coach Lothar Matthaus. "In all honesty, the level of the Hungarian League doesn't prepare my team for matches like this."

Peterjon Cresswell

BULGARIA

CSKA go clear

CSKA Sofia finally broke clear at the top of the table after beating Nesebar 2-0 away in mid-March while title challengers Levski lost 1-0 at home to Litex Lovech. The two sides, both unbeaten until Levski's defeat, had been neck and neck for months as they sprinted clear of the pack.

CSKA received another boost when national team midfielder Todor Yanchev returned following the collapse of his move to Russian side Shinnik Yaroslavl. The 28-year-old, CSKA's captain for the past three years, will remain at the club until the end of the campaign.

Former international Petar Hubchev has been appointed coach of fifth-placed Slavia Sofia, replacing Atanas Dzhambazki. Hubchev, who signed an 18-month contract, is also assistant to national team boss Hristo Stoichkov and will continue in that role. Dzhambazki, who had been in charge for six months, will become Hubchev's assistant.

Second Division Pirin reached the Cup semi-finals after beating top-flight Marek on penalties.

Michael Bowesfield

MOLDOVA

Dobrovolski back in action

Former Russian international Igor Dobrovolski is returning to action, with hometown club FC Tiligul-Tiras Tiraspol, after a six-year absence from the game.

The 37-year-old, who is player-coach with his new club, played his last game in 1999, for Fortuna Dusseldorf. Dobrovolski, who began his career with Nistru Chisinau, won 46 caps with the USSR/CIS/Russia, appearing at the 1990 World Cup finals and Euro 92 and 96.

Pavel Cebanu has been re-elected FA president.

Miron Goihman

Crunch time for Corinthians

BRAZILIAN CHAMPIONSHIP PREVIEW

IF BIG BUDGETS win championships, then the other 21 teams might as well stay at home. Corinthians have spent so much more than anyone else since their controversial deal with Media Sports Investments (MSI) that they have made the English Premiership look egalitarian by comparison.

Naturally, the pressure will also be enormous. The dreaded word 'galacticos' has already been mentioned, and although the team were granted a period of grace during the Paulista (Sao Paulo) state championship, there will be no such generosity when the national championship gets going.

MSI president Kia Joorabchian has said his aim is to win the Libertadores Cup in 2006, so a top-three finish will be mandatory.

The decision to add coach Daniel Passarella to the Argentinian contingent at Corinthians has added even more spice. Joorabchian inherited Brazilian coach Tite when he took over but had made it clear that he wanted a big name. Tite held on until February before resigning amid reports that Joorabchian had demanded that Carlos Alberto, one of his big-money signings, take the penalties instead of Coelho, one of the club's home-grown youngsters.

The Corinthians-MSI experiment is going to make this one of the most fascinating Brazilian championships for a long time. The federation has kept the orthodox league format for a third year running and, better still, the First Division has been downsized to 22 teams from last year's 24, with a further two-team reduction planned for next year. Finally, the directors have come to their senses and ditched the £3 minimum ticket price, which was largely to blame for the ridiculous average attendance of just 8,000 last year.

Brian Homewood

Main attraction...Carlos Tevez is Corinthians' standout signing

Still around...Robinho remains at Santos, boosting their hopes of retaining the title

THE FAVOURITES

CORINTHIANS

The team in the spotlight. Just to recap, the major signings are Argentinian forward Carlos Tevez, 21, from Boca Juniors for a South American record £10million, defender Sebastian Dominguez, from Argentinian champions Newell's Old Boys, UEFA Champions League winner Carlos Alberto from FC Porto, Gustavo Nery from Werder Bremen, Roger from Fluminense and Daniel Passarella in the coaching hot seat. Roger divides opinions: some see him as a genius, others as a prima donna. Passarella, who did not make the decision to sign him, substituted him in his first four games in charge.

SAO PAULO

Coach Emerson Leao was once beaten up when coach of Atletico Mineiro during a brawl after a CONMEBOL Cup match in Argentina. Since then, he has scarcely veiled his contempt for Brazil's neighbours, so would like nothing better than to upstage Argentine-dominated Corinthians with a team that has cost only a fraction of their outlay. Grafite and Diego Souza form a physically intimidating strikeforce, midfielder Renan has good potential and Uruguayan centre-back Diego Lugano is considered good enough to partner Paolo Montero at international level. Goalkeeper Rogerio Ceni is in excellent form at both ends: he doubles as a free-kick and penalty specialist.

SANTOS

Vanderlei Luxemburgo, who led Santos to last year's title, has gone. Oswaldo de Oliveira lasted just 10 weeks, and his replacement, Gallo, has never coached in the First Division before. But with Robinho and several other players staying on, they should still be able to mount a challenge.

CRUZEIRO

Made a poor attempt at defending their 2003 title last season, finishing 13th after the directors seemed more interested in selling off the team. This year, they may be back among the challengers. Levir Culpi, who led Atletico Paranaense to second place last year, has returned as coach, while striker Fred, 22, could be a revelation.

THE OTHERS

ATLETICO MINEIRO, Cruzeiro's arch-rivals from Belo Horizonte, just escaped relegation last year. Procopio Cardoso, who led them through their final three games, has stayed on as coach. The club should benefit from the experience of strikers Fabio Junior and Euller and midfielder Rodrigo Fabri.

PALMEIRAS are the only one of the big Sao Paulo clubs who are not likely title contenders. Their only recent signing is Juninho from Celtic, nothing to get excited about if his recent form is anything to go by.

SAO CAETANO are still considered 'small' despite finishing second in 2000 and 2001, sixth in 2002 and fourth in 2003. They were among the challengers last year but their season fell apart after defender Serginho collapsed and died during a game. Estevam Soares has taken over as coach, replacing Zetti, who lasted only two months.

PONTE PRETA, from Campinas, near Sao Paulo, did well to finish 10th last year but struggled in the recent Paulista championship. Coach Nene Santana was dismissed after only three matches and replaced by Oswaldo Alvarez, back for a second stint, who was in charge of Second Division Bahia last year.

Over in Rio de Janeiro, it looks as though all four clubs will be focused once again on avoiding relegation. FLAMENGO coach Cuca has an impressive new hair implant but little else has changed at Brazil's most popular club. The young squad is unlikely to handle the pressure exerted by their huge and fickle support, and red-card prone, 35-year-old captain Junior Baiano hardly sets the best of examples.

There have been no significant new signings at either FLUMINENSE or BOTAFOGO, and their coaching appointments have been uninspired: Abel Braga and P C Gusmao, respectively, were among the four coaches hired and fired by Flamengo last year. VASCO DA GAMA's top signing has been Romario, now 39, who plays and trains when he feels like it. Coach Joel Santana has not had a happy recent record in the competition: in 2003, he was fired by Fluminense and Vitoria, and by Guarani and Internacional last year.

The capital Brasilia will be represented this year after BRASILIENSE won promotion. The club are best known for their president, Luiz Estevao, a former Congressman who was kicked out of office for alleged irregularities.

GOIAS, from nearby Goiania, have a reputation as one of the country's most stable clubs and will be aiming to improve on last term's creditable sixth-place finish.

FORTALEZA, the other promoted side, are the sunny north-east's only representatives. The club have already had two coaching changes since being promoted: Zetti resigned to join Sao Caetano and replacement Dorival Junior lasted only two months. Vagner Benazzi is now in the hot seat.

The team who do most travelling are PAYSANDU, based in Belem, on the banks of the Amazon river – a three-hour flight just to Sao Paulo.

Heading south to Curitiba, ATLETICO PARANAENSE have dismantled the side that finished second last year. Washington, who was championship top scorer in his comeback season after undergoing heart-related surgery, has departed as have three young revelations – Jadson, Dagoberto and Fernandinho. City rivals CORITIBA have stood by coach Antonio Lopes and look set to finish mid-table like last year. PARANA are perennial relegation candidates.

FIGUEIRENSE, from the delightful coastal city of Florianopolis, had a miserable time in their regional championship, and new coach Marco Aurelio was desperately looking for late reinforcements ahead of the national campaign. They have finished 11th in the past two seasons, their best-ever performances.

In the far south, Juventude and Internacional are Rio Grande do Sul's last two representatives following Gremio's relegation. INTERNACIONAL were champions three times in the 1970s but have managed only one top-three finish since 1990. But the club do produce good, young players, the latest being Rafael Sobis. Muricy Ramalho has stayed on as coach.

Likewise, JUVENTUDE, from Caxias do Sul, in the heart of Brazil's wine-producing region, have held on to Ivo Wortmann, who led them to seventh last year.

● *See overleaf for Brazil news*

Celtic signing...Juninho, at Palmeiras

Young and old have a ball at Central

Striking form...19-year-old Pablo Vitti has been among the goals in Rosario Central's early surge

ARGENTINA

THE YOUNGEST TEAM led by the division's oldest coach were pacesetters in the closing championship after winning four and drawing two of their first six games.

Rosario Central's average age is just over 22, with their two strikers, Pablo Vitti – the sensation of the early weeks of the campaign – and Marcos Rubens both just 19. By contrast, Angel Zof, coaching the club for the fifth time, is 77.

Central made no big-money signings during the close season and even sold midfielders Pablo Sanchez (to Quilmes) and Eduardo Coudet (San Lorenzo). Meanwhile, one new arrival, 36-year-old former national team defender Jose Chamot, has yet to appear for the first team. So, what is the secret of Central's good start? According to Zof it is quite simple: "We play the ball around well."

Opening champions Newell's Old Boys, now under Arsenio Ribeca, were the only other unbeaten side after six rounds. However, although Central's city rivals had conceded only two goals, they had scored just five and had drawn four of their games.

"We are not trying to win, we have too much respect for our rivals," stormed Ariel Ortega, Newell's veteran forward. "We must convince ourselves we are champions and can beat the others with a virtually unchanged team."

Central beat San Lorenzo 3-1 away in the sixth round to leapfrog previous leaders River Plate, 2-1 losers at Estudiantes. The latter game was mired in controversy after referee Oscar Sequeira gave two dubious decisions against River. He awarded Estudiantes a penalty after an unintentional handball by Horacio Ameli, then ruled out a goal by Luis Gonzalez, also for handball, though video evidence was far from conclusive that he had transgressed.

The recent spate of veteran signings looks like continuing, with both Boca Juniors and River having contacted Juan Sebastian Veron about returning to play for them. Meanwhile, new Gimnasia y Esgrima de La Plata coach Pedro Troglio is angling to bring 38-year-old former international Claudio Caniggia out of retirement.

Gimnasia were one of seven clubs to have switched coaches after just six weeks of the closing campaign, Troglio replacing Carlos Ischia. Colon Santa Fe were quickest off the mark, firing duo Juan Antonio Pizzi and Peruvian Jose Del Solar after only three games.

Talleres Cordoba, relegated last season, are the latest Argentinian club to go bankrupt.

Eric Weil

Reprieved...Venezuela (in burgundy) were able to re-focus on the World Cup

Ban threat lifted after climbdown

VENEZUELA

VENEZUELA'S ATTEMPT TO qualify for their first World Cup nearly came to a premature end when FIFA threatened to suspend them because of an internal feud over elections in the Venezuelan federation (FVF).

FIFA stepped in when opposition group Futbol Popular, led by Alejandro Sanchez Martorelli, filed an appeal to the country's Supreme Court calling for a change in the FVF electoral process.

FIFA does not tolerate football matters being taken to civil courts and immediately threatened to suspend Venezuela unless the opposition withdrew their action and the federation's elections went ahead as planned.

Five days before the deadline, the Supreme Court ordered the elections to take place – but this did not satisfy FIFA either because it was also seen as outside interference.

With disaster looming, Martorelli agreed to withdraw his presidential candidacy, the elections were held under FVF rules and Rafael Esquivel, who has already been in charge for 18 years, was re-elected yet again, although, even unopposed, he won only 26 of the 34 votes. "I feel very satisfied with the result, but I want to add that today it was soccer that triumphed," said Esquivel.

Brian Homewood

Olimpia win at last

PARAGUAY

OLIMPIA ended one of the longest winless runs in their history when beating Nacional 1-0 on March 20. They had not won since November, when Nacional were also the victims.

Their bad run has already claimed one coaching victim this year, with Gustavo Benitez being dismissed and replaced by Argentinian Daniel Cordoba.

To add insult to injury, Olimpia's arch-rivals Cerro Porteno were unbeaten after seven opening championship games and leading by six points from 12 de Octubre.

Brian Homewood

Referee attacks fan

BRAZIL

"FAN ATTACKS REFEREE" is, sadly, a relatively common headline in Brazilian football. So one referee decided he'd rather see it written the other way around. We have obliged.

An explosive Belo Horizonte derby between America and Atletico Mineiro, which had already produced nine yellow cards and three reds, was drawing to a close when a shirtless supporter ran on to the field towards match official Luiz Carlos Silva.

Silva decided that attack was the best form of defence and landed several punches on the fan. A brawl followed as truncheon-wielding riot police raced after the supporter and Atletico players tried to protect him.

This sparked more fighting as police laid into the Atletico players – goalkeeper Danrlei later accused police of beating him. There was more trouble outside the dressing-room as an off-duty policeman brandished a gun and was disarmed by other officers.

Silva was unrepentant, saying: "I had to defend myself. And I did it by going on to the attack. If I had run away, it would have looked bad. And I was not prepared to suffer this embarrassment with my children watching [on television]."

Brazilian football is plagued by this sort of incident and will be until it can change its culture of impunity. Last year, Atletico Mineiro and Cruzeiro players were involved in a pitched battle after a game at the same Mineirao stadium. Cruzeiro defender Cris was at first given an exemplary nine-month punishment for his involvement, but this was quickly overturned and he was even called up by Brazil shortly afterwards.

Then there was the case of Junior Baiano, the 1998 World Cup defender. He was banned for five games after making a gesture that in Brazil means robbery after being sent off playing for Flamengo. Almost immediately, he was reprieved and cleared to play in a Carioca (Rio) state championship match against Vasco da Gama. And, yes, he got himself sent off in that game as well.

This was almost comical. But there was nothing funny about the dreadful example committed by Botafogo. The Rio club have recently employed forward Guilherme even though the ex-Rayo Vallecano player has been convicted of causing death by dangerous driving and perverting the course of justice by saying he was not at the wheel at the time.

In February, Guilherme was sentenced to five years and four months by a court in Marilia after his car collided with another vehicle, killing two of its occupants. The court heard Guilherme was driving at high speed in the wrong lane. He has appealed and Brazilian justice allows him to remain free until the new hearing takes place.

Brian Homewood

They never learn...Junior Baiano had a five-game ban lifted then was sent off again

Wounded Donovan makes shock return

UNITED STATES

Time limit...Donovan was used almost solely as a late sub at Leverkusen

UNEXPECTEDLY, AND RATHER shockingly, Landon Donovan is back playing in MLS. He left San Jose Earthquakes for Germany at the start of the year, rejoining Bayer Leverkusen where, as a teenager, he had spent two unhappy years in 1999 and 2000.

But this time it was going to be different. After four years with Earthquakes (and two League titles) Donovan, now 23, had matured and unarguably established himself as the best, certainly the most exciting, player ever produced by the United States.

A European triumph beckoned, but a fiasco was what we got. Donovan evidently expected to start every game. That didn't happen, with coach Klaus Augenthaler limiting his playing time to late substitute appearances. Then, when his big chance to star arrived – as a starter in the second leg of Leverkusen's Champions League tie with Liverpool – Donovan played so poorly that his club lost interest in him.

'If you want to leave, just go,' was their message. Donovan duly left after only two and a half months and was welcomed back by MLS. Certainly not as a conquering hero, but as an eminently marketable American player. The move has already had enormous consequences for MLS, and for Donovan.

His image as the golden boy of American soccer has taken a severe dent. He now looks like a spoiled American who couldn't make it in Europe and who ran for home as soon as things got difficult. Worse still, Donovan – whose family live near Los Angeles – arm-twisted MLS into ensuring that he joined Los Angeles Galaxy. Under the League's complicated player-allocation rules, he could not return to Earthquakes, and should have joined FC Dallas. But he got assurances from the League that a deal would be done that would allow him to join Galaxy.

Would he have joined MLS if he had not had that assurance? No, says his agent Richard Motzkin. So, in effect, Donovan gave MLS an ultimatum. Motzkin denies that, pointing out that exceptional players in every sport get exceptional treatment.

True enough, but as it happens there was another exceptional player involved in this transaction. Guatemalan forward Carlos Ruiz has been Galaxy's top scorer ever since joining them in 2002. That same year he topped the MLS scoring chart, scored the goal that gave Galaxy the championship, and was voted the League's most valuable player. He was again the League's top scorer in 2003.

In fact, Ruiz has, at least, an equal claim with Donovan to be the League's most important asset. Somehow, that got overlooked. To get Donovan from FC Dallas, Galaxy quickly agreed to a swap with Ruiz. Where MLS was falling over itself to accommodate Donovan, Ruiz was simply ignored. "I was obligated to follow the decision to go to Dallas," said the Guatemalan. "I am sad because nobody responded to my wishes."

In a further twist, it so happens that Motzkin is also the agent for Ruiz. And it was Motzkin who eventually persuaded Ruiz that this was a good move for him. And one can confidently guess that part of the persuasion was better remuneration for Ruiz.

At Galaxy, they have already managed to forget about Ruiz, and are now proclaiming the beginning of the Donovan era.

Paul Gardner

Business as usual – for now

DALLAS CUP

THERE WERE NO surprises in the 26th edition of the Dallas Cup. Brazil's Atletico Paranaense retained the under-19 Super Group trophy with a 1-0 win over Mexico's Santos Laguna in the Final. Guadalajara of Mexico won the under-14 title, while US teams took the under-12s (Solar SC of Dallas), under-16s (Chicago Magic), under-17s (Arsenal FC, California) and under-19s (IMG Academy, Florida).

But if it was business as usual in 2005, that will not be the case next year, when the Dallas Cup will undergo the biggest change in its history. The headquarters for the 2006 tournament will move 20 miles north of Dallas, to the community of Frisco, where a £38million soccer complex is under construction.

This includes a 21,000-seat stadium that will serve as home for MLS club FC Dallas. It will also serve as the venue for the Dallas Cup's final matches, but the regular tournament games will be played on 15 full-size pitches adjoining the stadium. All are grass pitches and all have lights.

To celebrate the move, tournament director Gordon Jago announced that Real Madrid and Manchester United have both agreed to send a team to play in the Super Group tournament. So Jago now has to decide whether to put the two giants in separate groups, taking the risk they may not meet at all, or put them in the same group, and be assured of a stadium-filling first-round match-up.

One other problem: the move to Frisco makes the tournament's title a bit iffy. The Dallas Area Cup, anyone?

Paul Gardner

Up and down...Cruz Azul (blue) and Pumas

Cruz control

MEXICO

CRUZ AZUL were virtually certain of reaching the closing championship play-offs with seven rounds still to play after taking a nine-point lead in Group 2. Their impressive goals record – 23 for and only eight against after 10 rounds – had brought them seven wins. Their only defeat came away to opening semi-finalists Atlante, 2-0.

By contrast, Pumas UNAM were almost out of contention for a play-off spot and the chance to win a third consecutive championship. They lost six of their first 10 games to trail Group 1 leaders Morelia by 10 points and second-placed America by nine. Only the top two from each of the three groups are guaranteed play-off berths.

Carlos Ramirez

Esperance in great escape

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

AFTER SIX YEARS of successfully qualifying for the group phase of the African Champions League, Esperance, Tunisia's glamour club, came within 20 minutes of tumbling out in this year's formative stages.

But the side staged a remarkable comeback against Al Hilal of Sudan to reach the final knockout round.

The Tunisians had lost 2-0 in the first leg in Khartoum, a result that ended the short reign of Swiss coach Claude Andrey. They then went a further goal behind back home after Al Hilal, down to 10 men, found the net in the 57th minute. But inspired by the switch of captain Moyin Chabani from defender into attacker at half-time, the hosts scored five goals in the last 20 minutes to win through. Chabani scored twice after Kamel Zaiem had finally put Esperance on the scoreboard, with the other goals coming from Nigerian Ekhousuehi Edorisi and Amine Ltifi, recently signed from France.

Tunisia's other representatives, Etoile Sahel, had a much smoother passage, beating Senegal's AS Douanes 3-1 at home after a 0-0 draw away. Raja Casablanca and Royal Armed Forces (Morocco), Al Ahli and Zamalek (Egypt) and Algeria's USM Alger complete the formidable north African line-up in the next round.

However, Algerian champions JS Kabylie crashed out to unheralded Guinean side Fello Star Labe. Having lost 1-0 away in the first leg, JSK were then held to a goalless draw in the return despite being awarded two dubious penalties. Justice was served as both kicks were saved.

Mark Gleeson

Fighting back...Damian Chigozie (right) vies with Omar Bakheet of Al Hilal during Esperance's remarkable second leg win

ROUND-UP

SOUTHERN AFRICA

Bruce Grobbelaar has quit as coach of Umtata Bush Bucks in SOUTH AFRICA with the team bottom of the Premier League, while ex-national coach Ephraim Mashaba was sacked by Black Leopards as they plunged towards the relegation zone. Clive Barker, another former South Africa coach, has taken the reins at fellow strugglers Santos.

WEST AFRICA

A Djalilou Traore goal gave Dyto victory over Agaza Lome in the TOGO Cup Final.

NORTH AFRICA

In TUNISIA, Portuguese coach Luis Miguel has been replaced by Ahmed Mghribi at lowly Stade Tunisien, the club's fifth coaching change this term. Olympique Beja have replaced Romanian boss Alexandre Moldovan with Wahid Hidoussi

CENTRAL AFRICA

Gaston Tchingana has succeeded Christian Letard as coach of CONGO.

Mark Gleeson

Australia set to join AFC

AFTER ALMOST THREE decades of fruitless attempts, Australia's hopes of leaving the Oceania Football Confederation and joining the larger and significantly stronger Asian Football Confederation have received a massive boost.

An application by the newly-revamped Football Federation of Australia to join the AFC was unanimously accepted by the confederation's executive committee in Kuala Lumpur at the end of March. The wheels have now been set in motion for the Australians to complete their defection before the end of the year.

FIFA president Sepp Blatter has also declared there are few obstacles standing in the way of the AFC acquiring Australia as its 46th member. "The OFC has not yet taken its final stance but there is no doubt that the [OFC] executive committee are looking positively into the leaving of Australia by agreeing that it is too strong for the OFC," he said.

"Australia take away practically all the spots for FIFA's Under-17 and Under-20 Championships, the Olympic Games and women's competitions, and so the others look at such a move with open minds."

Blatter did sound a note of caution, saying FIFA's executive committee could yet scupper the move. "If it's too easy to change confederation in the end you will have a confederation of all the big countries, and that leaves those that are not so big alone. This is not solidarity," he said. "But so far, we can't see any hurdles that would not allow such a movement."

While the Australians have long been seeking a shift into Asia, the rapid pace of the current initiative came as a surprise. The AFC's acceptance was an even bigger shock, given its previous stance against admitting Australia. However, concerns over geographical issues and a fear that the Australians would dominate the body have been overcome by the desire of AFC president Mohamed Bin Hammam to increase his organisation's reach.

Relations between Australia and Asia have warmed considerably since Hammam took up the presidency in August 2002, and he expressed confidence that the two would be allowed to link formally.

"One member association joining another confederation is quite normal," said Hammam. "Previously, Kazakhstan left us to join UEFA. The statutes of all confederations and FIFA allow these changes to happen, if the situation permits. So, currently, Australia feel that their departure will bring mutual benefit to them and Oceania."

Australian federation chairman Frank Lowy added: "The AFC believes Australia will be an asset to them, and I believe they will be an asset to us, and that the game will be transformed as a result."

No doubt the economic potential of the proposed move is encouraging to both parties. Australia has a mature media market and strong economy, and its involvement in Asia is sure to be mutually beneficial financially.

The proposed switch will be debated by the OFC's executive committee on April 16 and then go on to the agenda of FIFA's executive committee on June 29. If all goes to plan, the Australians could be admitted to the AFC in September, clearing the way for them to play in the qualifying rounds for the 2007 Asian Cup. Also, clubs from Australia's revamped national league could be competing in the Asian Champions League from next year.

More significantly, Australia's defection will finally end the nation's dissatisfaction with its lot regarding World Cup places.

Oceania had been promised a full berth at future World Cups only for FIFA to reverse the decision in 2003 and continue to make the region's top side – nearly always Australia – play-off against a South American country for a finals place. By contrast, Asia currently has four guaranteed finals berths, as well as a play-off route.

Michael Church

Flying the flag...Australia line up for a friendly against Iraq, with whom they may soon be fellow confederation members

New boy in Nagoya...An Yong-hak has strengthened Grampus Eight's midfield

Grampus quick out of blocks

JAPAN

NAGOYA GRAMPUS EIGHT made the most impressive start to the new season, beating perennial championship contenders Jubilo Iwata 3-0 in the second round having been denied an opening-day victory only by JEF United Chiba's late equaliser.

Grampus have some of the most exciting young players in the League, including powerful 18-year-old Keisuke Honda on the left, defender Keiji Watanabe, 20, and fleet-footed striker Keita Sugimoto, 22. The team's midfield has been strengthened by the arrival of 26-year-old North Korean international An Yong-hak.

Last year's top teams all struggled early on. Jubilo manager Masakuni Yamamoto blamed the Grampus defeat on his side's fatigue because of their Asian Champions League schedule. Defending champions Yokohama F Marinos lost to Jubilo on the opening day, and Urawa Reds, last year's runners-up, lost 1-0 at home to Kashima Antlers in their first game and needed an injury-time goal to snatch a 3-3 draw at newly-promoted Kawasaki Frontale the following week.

The Reds-Antlers match was marred by ugly scenes on the pitch, with the respective managers, Guido Buchwald and Toninho Cerezo, accusing their opponents of starting the trouble.

Mike Plastow & Yumiko Nagae

Cup finalist Cahill takes player prize

OCEANIA

Tim Cahill pipped Australian compatriots Mark Schwarzer and Marco Bresciano to win the OCEANIA FOOTBALLER OF THE YEAR AWARD. Cahill, capped by Samoa at Under-17 level before switching allegiance to Australia, won the vote thanks to his exploits with last season's English FA Cup runners-up Millwall and now Champions League-chasing Everton.

AUSTRALIA won both their recent friendlies against Asian opposition, fortuitously overcoming Iraq 2-1 in Sydney before a much easier 3-0 defeat of Indonesia three days later in Perth. The Iraqis took the lead early on through Mohammad Nasir and dominated for long periods. However, Bresciano equalised with a free-kick and substitute Ahmad Elrich claimed the winner in the 73rd minute. Ante Milicic scored a goal in each half in the Indonesia game, David Zdrilic adding the third with five minutes left.

Sydney FC have appointed former Germany World Cup star Pierre Littbarski as head coach.

Veteran South African striker Grant Young was the toast of Auckland City after scoring an injury-time winner, his second goal of the game, against Waitakere United in a hard-fought NEW ZEALAND Championship Grand Final. United were twice ahead, through Daniel Ellensohn and Keryn Jordan after Young had equalised just after half-time. Liam Mulrooney pulled City level again.

Papua New Guinea's Sobou swept past Tuanaimato Breeze of Samoa 7-0 on aggregate in the OCEANIA CHAMPIONS CUP preliminary round to reach the finals in Tahiti.

A Pansa side including six teenagers defeated Konica 1-0 in the AMERICAN SAMOA championship Grand Final. However, continuing problems within the local FA have led Pansa to withdraw from the Oceania Champions Cup.

Paul Moon

Oceania's finest...Cahill

ASIAN ROUND-UP

Austrian Alfred Riedl has returned to VIETNAM for a third stint as national coach. He replaces Edson Tavares, who resigned following the team's poor showing at the Tiger Cup in December.

Former Shenzhen Jianlibao coach Zhu Guanghu has been named as CHINA'S national team boss, in succession to Arie Haan. The Dutchman departed after the team failed to qualify for the final group phase of Asia's World Cup qualifiers.

China defender Sun Jihai has signed a new one-year contract with Manchester City, despite missing most of the season with injury.

Sasom Pobrasert resigned as coach of THAILAND'S BEC Tero Sasana after the team lost their opening two games in the Champions League group stage. BEC were losing finalists in 2003, while Pobrasert twice won the Asian Club Championship as a player with the now-defunct Thai Farmers Bank in the mid-1990s.

Mohammedan SC, of BANGLADESH, have sacked South Korean coach Man Young-kang after defeat in the Independence Day Gold Cup semi-finals.

Blue Star SC from Kalutara clinched SRI LANKA'S Champions Trophy by beating Negombo Youth SC 1-0.

Former Cameroon coach Winfried Schafer has taken the reins at UNITED ARAB EMIRATES club Al Ahli.

Michael Church & Azam Mahmood

Power to the people's club

AFC Wimbledon are working their way back up the league pyramid with supporters at the helm. David Conn reports

New glory...Sonny Farr tries to block a clearance from Micky Regan of Dorking during the game in which AFC Wimbledon clinched promotion to the Ryman Premier League

KINGSMEADOW IS A rather grand, historical title for the functional, semi-professional football stadium tucked away in one of the gentler patches of south London suburbia. The unrestrained celebrations at the ground in late March might also have seemed a touch excessive – the club had, after all, only won promotion to the Ryman League Premier Division, still three tiers below the Football League. Yet the partying can be indulged because this is AFC Wimbledon, a special, vitally important club for these footballing times.

Wimbledon FC, the club that battered its way from the Southern League to the Premiership in the 1980s, was a hugely important story for English football, proving that its 'pyramid' system allows any club to rise through promotions to the very top. The journey reached its apex when Wimbledon beat the Liverpool of John Barnes, Kenny Dalglish and Alan Hansen in the 1988 FA Cup Final.

The success of Wimbledon's Crazy Gang would have felt a touch more romantic had it not been a triumph of brutality, epitomised most vividly by Vinnie Jones' Wembley threat to "rip off" Dalglish's ear and – in the polite version – spit in the hole. Nevertheless, to Wimbledon's hardcore of just 4,000 fans it was an extraordinary trip from local non-league battles to roughing up the game's most glamorous names.

Yet even while the Crazy Gang was marauding, quieter, backstage developments were taking place that would undermine and ultimately kill the club itself. Wimbledon's owner was Sam Hammam, a Lebanese engineer who always said he had fallen in love with the club and bought it for £100,000 in 1981. Three years later, as payment for loans he made to finance the team, Hammam's company, Rudgwick Ltd, took ownership of Wimbledon's ground, Plough Lane.

Hammam, relentlessly ambitious, for ever wanting to take the club to a new level, talked about merging Wimbledon with Crystal Palace, a plan the fans organised to oppose. Hammam also proposed building a new stadium, which the fans wholeheartedly backed, but he never brought it to fruition. Instead, in 1991, saying Plough Lane was

Crazy Gang, crazy days...Wimbledon celebrate their against-the-odds 1988 FA Cup Final triumph over Liverpool at Wembley

now too small, Hammam moved Wimbledon to become Palace's tenants at Selhurst Park.

His next plan was the most outrageous – to move the club to Dublin, to become the Premier League's Irish franchise, a proposal approved, remarkably, by the Premier League itself. Hammam then sold 80 per cent of Wimbledon to two Norwegian businessmen, Bjorn Gjelsten and shipping magnate Kjell Inge Rokke, for an outlandish £25million.

The Dublin move, however, was halted by the small but doughty Football Association of Ireland, which was not prepared to sanction a Premier League invasion. This left the Norwegians holding a costly, loss-making, homeless club, carrying nothing but its history and a seriously disgruntled bunch of fans.

In 1998, not greatly noticed, Hammam sold Plough Lane to a supermarket, Safeway, making himself another £5m. Then in 2000, he sold his remaining Wimbledon stake for £1.5m.

The new Wimbledon chairman, Charles Koppel, who knew Rokke and Gjelsten through their other, playboy sport, powerboating, landed eventually on an idea that terminally alienated the fans – moving the club 70 miles north, to Milton Keynes.

The new town, named after two economists and routinely scorned for soullessness and famous only for its many roundabouts, has nevertheless risen to some prosperity, with a growing population – but no professional football club.

Peter Winkelman, a Milton Keynes music producer, had touted the town's merits to other financially failing southern clubs – Queen's Park Rangers, Luton Town, even little Barnet – but all turned him down. If Winkelman could attract a club, the local authority would permit a stadium to be built, and retailers – Asda Wal-Mart, as it turned out, the world's biggest supermarket – would pay for it.

In July 2001, Wimbledon's board resolved to head for this new, Milton Keynes future. The supporters' opposition was a mix of outrage, contempt and bitter laughter.

The Football League dismissed the plan because it requires clubs to retain links with the towns whose names they bear, but Koppel appealed and the issue was lobbed around until the Football Association convened an independent panel of three people to make a judgement. Koppel's lawyers made an urgent financial case for relocation, supporters groups pleaded against it on all grounds and said if the panel allowed the move, they would consider their club defunct, form a new club and start again.

By two to one, the panel voted for the move, arguing it would give Wimbledon a financial lifeline. Notoriously, they said of the fans' plans: "Resurrecting the club from its ashes as, say, 'Wimbledon Town' is, with respect to those supporters...not in the wider interests of football."

Hammam, meanwhile, had bought 83 per cent of Cardiff City, for £3.14m, and was talking in

'Hammam's plan was to move the club to Dublin'

familiar terms: he had "fallen in love" again, wanted to make Cardiff the club for the whole of Wales and build them a superstadium. There, many fans, angry at years of decline, hailed him like a messiah.

At Wimbledon, the fans, as promised, started their own club. The Milton Keynes fiasco coincided with supporters' wider disillusionment with the money-driven Premiership and self-interested club owners. The idea of becoming true clubs, owned and run by fans, was being rediscovered, backed by the government through a new body, Supporters Direct. AFC Wimbledon became the standard bearers for this movement and they attracted almost the whole support away from the old club they now condemned as "The Franchise".

The new club started life in 2002-03 in the lowly Combined Counties League, where it attracted crowds higher than Wimbledon FC's in the Football League's First Division, took 2,000 to away matches at grounds normally expecting around 50, and put together English football's longest ever unbeaten run, 78 matches.

They have huge challenges ahead, not least paying off the £800,000 debt from buying Kingsmeadow after its occupiers, Kingstonian, another long-established non-league club, became insolvent. On March 28, however, the relentless fundraising could be forgotten for a night, after AFC Wimbledon won promotion again, with a 3-0 win over Dorking in front of 3,321 fans who have loved every second of the experience. Ironically, they look likely to replace Kingstonian, who are rock-bottom of the Ryman top flight.

It turned out Cardiff's own rise, up two divisions, was financed with loans of £31m, the new stadium is not built and the money ran out in February. Rudgwick Ltd, which now owns the club, was paid £583,000 in management fees last year, a painful detail that has dissolved much of Hammam's mystique.

AFC Wimbledon are trying to take it steady but they have become an inspiration to many who strongly disagree with the FA panel's views about what represent "the wider interests of football". Manchester United supporters, facing constant takeover talk from American tycoon Malcolm Glazer, have said that if he buys their club, they will set up an AFC-style United, owned by the fans, for the fans, with a new, community-based, sporting ethos.

At some point on their journey, most AFC Wimbledon supporters hope they will come across "The Franchise", now officially renamed MK Dons and playing in the second tier of the Football League. There are few in the English football nation with any doubts about which club they would support in that particular contest.

Youth on their side

Managers are getting younger as clubs break with the past. Howard Johnson reports

New breed...Watford's Adrian Boothroyd

SIR ALEX FERGUSON may be hanging on to power at Manchester United at 63, but whether he likes it or not, there is a change coming in management. When Watford recently appointed Adrian Boothroyd – aged 34 years, one month – the message couldn't have been clearer: the day of the doyen manager is almost over.

It is true that a couple of current Premiership managers were appointed when over 50 – Newcastle's Graeme Souness and Harry Redknapp at Southampton. But the trend towards employing the young and thrusting is undeniable. The avuncular old father figure who dispenses wisdom from on high is no more. No more Joe Mercers. No more Bertie Mees. No more Bob Paisleys. And one day before very long, no more Alex Fergusons.

The last time an English club appointed a manager of that ilk was when Sir Bobby Robson took the reins at Newcastle in September 1999.

That was an unashamedly sentimental appointment at a time of crisis for the club. Ruud Gullit had unsettled everyone and everything with a thoroughly distasteful combination of arrogance and flash. A father figure was clearly needed, and who fitted the bill better than Robson? But even this affair of the heart ended in tears.

Robson seemed bemused by the attitudes of many of his players, as if they'd been beamed in from another planet. He couldn't get his head round how to deal with the wayward attitudes of your Bellamys and your Dyers. How could these players simply have no respect for him, or seemingly for their profession?

The football business is now as fast-paced as it is furious, driven by the soundbite, the clamour for instant success, a media-friendly face and a 'me, me, me' culture. The values people like Robson have always believed were the backbone of any football club – respect, diligence, a collective spirit – have been eroded by money. Most players don't look at an older manager and see years of football knowledge they can tap into. They see a bloke who could soon be drawing his pension.

And what power does a manager have over a player any more? In the top two or three divisions, players are all earning so much that if some old-timer starts shouting down at them they'll simply sit back, bide their time and move on a Bosman.

The fans, too, don't want an old codger in charge any more than the players do. They want their boss to be smooth, suave and urbane, especially since Jose Mourinho arrived at Chelsea.

'Values Robson believed in have been eroded by money'

Vim and vigour

Young managers are full of vim and vigour and sport FA coaching badges. "His knowledge of the game, understanding of players and tactical judgement shone through during our discussions," said Watford chairman Graham Simpson when Boothroyd was appointed. As if chairmen know the first thing about 'understanding players' and 'tactical judgement'!

Cynics would point out that it's simply that the younger the manager, the more desperate he'll be for the break and so the cheaper he'll be. Boothroyd has signed a 12-month rolling contract, which puts the onus on him to prove himself. The risk for Watford is minimal. If he does the business, everyone is happy. If he fails, they get rid of him with little cost and the sop to the fans that prudence has saved millions.

But let's not be too cynical. There are clearly some very good young managers out there. Iain Dowie at Crystal Palace and Everton's David Moyes have proved they can relate to their players, yet are still sharp enough to get their heads right and deliver. They've got results in the world of the multi-millionaire footballer by looking forwards, not backwards.

Think Dowie, Moyes, Mourinho, Chris Coleman at Fulham, Blackburn's Mark Hughes, Nigel Worthington at Norwich, Birmingham's Steve Bruce, Manchester City's Stuart Pearce. There are many more.

And think of the once proud elder statesmen – Robson, George Graham, Alan Ball, Terry Venables, Ron Atkinson, Gerard Houllier, Howard Kendall – who can't get a job polishing boots.

You could argue the desire to appoint young managers is nothing more than a trend. The last one was for foreign bosses. You couldn't move for them at one time, now there are just five in the Premiership (excluding Scots, Welsh and Irish, of course).

We could see a return to the days of the wise old godfather sitting up in the stands. But with the likes of Boothroyd stepping up to the plate, that world seems ever further away.

IT'S ALL GONE WRONG FOR...

ROBBIE SAVAGE

He thought the dust had finally settled after his acrimonious move from Birmingham to Blackburn but where Savage is concerned things are never that simple. No sooner had Wales manager John Toshack told the 30-year-old that he wouldn't be a part of his squad for the two World Cup qualifiers with Austria than Savage had announced his international retirement, sniping at Toshack by saying the former Real Madrid manager "obviously doesn't like me". Despite Savage hinting that he might have been too hasty in making his decision, Toshack has been reluctant to welcome the midfielder back into the fold with open arms. "There was respect lacking for certain people here," he said.

Hasty...Savage

Turnaround...Hughes

MEDIA WATCH

Jose Mourinho v UEFA

"It was an adulterated result. When I saw Rijkaard enter the referee's room at half-time I couldn't believe it...when Drogba was sent off I wasn't surprised."
Mourinho starts the whole affair with his comments in Portuguese newspaper *Record's* weekly magazine after Chelsea's Champions League match in Barcelona

"A penalty must hurt. If Mourinho isn't allowed to sit on the bench in the quarter-final against Bayern Munich it will hurt him."
Swiss former international referee Urs Meier calls for Mourinho to be banned in German magazine *Stern*

"The club passed on what they saw to UEFA, not in my case because I could not see."
Mourinho appears to change his tune in Spanish paper *La Vanguardia*. Mourinho quickly denies giving the interview

Sitting it out...Mourinho and assistant manager Steve Clarke did not attend the UEFA hearing

"Time will tell whether Mourinho is a great man; now he's a great coach. He wants respect, but doesn't seem to give much out and if anything goes against him it's disrespectful. I find it very strange that Mourinho didn't go to Nyon yesterday for the UEFA hearing. Being called a liar is as bad as it comes and yet he, [assistant] Steve Clarke and Chelsea's security official Les Miles did not go there to fight their corner."
Former Southampton manager Gordon Strachan questions Mourinho's reaction in *The Guardian*

"Mourinho went too far in Barcelona and so did one of his assistants, Andre Villas Boas, as the final whistle blew on Chelsea's thrilling aggregate victory at Stamford Bridge. Villas taunted Rijkaard, unhindered by stewards, one of whom seemed to be unnecessarily forceful in ushering [Barca forward] Samuel Eto'o away from the scene. UEFA are now interested in this and further charges may follow."
Patrick Barclay, writing in *The Sunday Telegraph*, claims another Chelsea assistant misbehaved

"I don't want to comment on the specific nature of anything that went on in the room, because I think it was a confidential proceeding."
Chelsea chairman Bruce Buck goes uncharacteristically coy in *The Mail On Sunday* after the two-match ban on Mourinho is imposed

"The total fine of £41,000 and the two-match touchline ban over the feud that began with Chelsea's visit to the Nou Camp will prove to Mourinho his long-held suspicion that aggression in the face of resistance solves many problems."
The Independent's Sam Wallace believes that for all UEFA's sabre-rattling, the punishment handed down was nothing more than a powder-puff penalty

"Challenging UEFA was a battle even Mourinho could not win. The result was a foregone conclusion. It was a waste of Chelsea's time and Roman Abramovich's loose change. Nobody is above the law, except maybe the lawmakers. However random the rules, however injudicious their remarks, it was UEFA's ball and they could take it home whenever they wanted. You didn't need eyes that can look round Catalan corners to see that."
Clive Tyldesley, writing in *The Daily Telegraph*, questions Mourinho's wisdom in taking on UEFA

"Jose's had to live a different life. He's developed a style and a way of talking that brings benefits, but can also have disagreeable consequences."
Barcelona's Deco, Mourinho's former acolyte at Porto, offers his view on the BBC's sports website

IT'S ALL GONE RIGHT FOR...

MARK HUGHES

There weren't too many people shouting from the rooftops when Blackburn moved quickly to appoint the Wales manager and former Ewood Park favourite after Graeme Souness's departure for Newcastle last September. And while no one in their right mind could claim that Hughes has performed miracles since he arrived in Lancashire, there must still be immense satisfaction for the softly-spoken Welshman. The former Manchester United striker has turned round a team that seemed fractured, ill-disciplined and in danger of falling through the Premiership trapdoor and made them into a tough, durable outfit who seem destined to escape relegation and made it to the FA Cup semi-finals (at least).

TALENT SCOUT

TOMORROW'S STARS TODAY

Sebastian MILA

Young Pole dubbed the new Nedved

POLISH MIDFIELDER Sebastian Mila, recently signed by Austria Wien from Groclin Grodzisk and considered by many in Poland to be the country's No 1 young prospect, is not the only member of his family to have distinguished himself in the sporting arena.

His father Stefan was a more than proficient footballer, playing for Polish Second Division side Gwardia Koszalin in the 1970s, while his cousin Wojtek Wolski is an ice-hockey star with Colorado Avalanche in the North American League.

Coincidentally, both Wolski and Mila junior have made their names in their respective sports thanks to their ability on the left flank, the former as a winger, the latter in a variety of roles. During his early career, with lower league Lechia Gdansk and Orlen Plock, Mila served as a high-energy left-back or left-sided defensive midfielder. But the blond was to have even more fun after joining Groclin Grodzisk, where coach Boguslaw Kaczmarek gave him a creative brief in the centre-left of midfield three years ago.

Mila took to his new position like a duck to water. Full of energy, a strong runner with the ball, a perceptive passer and an excellent taker of set-pieces, the youngster added another dimension to Groclin's approach play. With his stock rising fast, the player who was part of Poland's 2001 European Under-18 Championship-winning team was rewarded with a first senior cap in a friendly against Macedonia in early 2003.

Mila played a starring role in Groclin's UEFA Cup victories over Hertha Berlin and Manchester City in the autumn of 2003 – notably, curling home an outstanding free-kick in his team's 1-1 draw in Manchester – and also put in good work for the national side. It was no surprise, therefore, that the likes of Borussia Dortmund, Ajax, Feyenoord and Fulham were said to be tailing him. However, it was Austria Wien who carried the day, signing the 22-year-old during this January's transfer window for an undisclosed fee.

"I can see myself developing along the right lines at Austria Wien," said Mila on agreeing a two-and-a-half-year contract. "I'm close to being a good-quality player in European football but I'm not there yet. Austria will be good for me. They are an ambitious club and have many players with the sort of international experience that can rub off on me. I'm dying to show them what I can do."

Austria chairman Frank Stronach, never one for understatement, believes his club have stolen a march on sides with far more prestige than his own. He says: "What we've managed to do is bring in a young Pavel Nedved. Mila can be as good as the Czech star."

Nick Bidwell

FACT FILE

Club Austria Wien (Aut)
Country Poland
Born July 10, 1982, in Koszalin
Previous clubs Gwardia Koszalin, Baltyk Koszalin, Lechia Gdansk, Orlen Plock, Groclin Grodzisk
International debut February 2003, v Macedonia
International caps 17 (3 goals)
Honours European Under-18 Championship 2001

Luis Antonio VALENCIA

A goal-fest for Ecuador's latest discovery

COACH HERNAN DARIO GOMEZ created an Ecuador side good enough to make it to the 2002 World Cup, their first finals, but resigned when he saw his midfield was running out of steam in the attempt to get to Germany in 2006. In came Luis Fernando Suarez and out went the veteran trio of playmaker Alex Aguinaga, anchorman Alfonso Obregon and wide attacking midfielder Cleber Chala during the rebuilding process.

The first two will not prove easy to replace. But in the case of Chala, Suarez has fewer concerns. Teenage midfielder Luis Antonio Valencia made a huge impression in Chala's old position in Ecuador's two World Cup qualifiers at the end of March. He helped turn the game at home to Paraguay after Ecuador had conceded two early goals, blasting home twice with long shots as the hosts recovered to win 5-2. Valencia was even more impressive in the 2-2 draw away to Peru, and capped his display by sliding in his team's second goal at the far post.

"We really have to praise what Antonio did," said Suarez. "He had never started a World Cup qualifier before and he showed enough quality for us to be able to say that we've found a player."

Indeed, Valencia has the potential to add more to the team than Chala could. The role is identical; Ecuador play with two anchormen in central midfield, while the creative duo (Edison Mendez and now Valencia) work the flanks, frequently switching sides, offering support to the strikers.

Like Chala, Valencia is tall, strong and imposing in possession, capable of bursting beyond the opposing defence. But he is more of an all-round midfielder. He marks better and he also has a thunderous right-foot shot which, as Paraguay keeper Justo Villar will testify, is especially dangerous at the altitude of Quito, where the ball flies through the air.

Valencia has also followed a rapid trajectory through the world of football. And, as in all success stories, failure is part of the process. He grew up in the oil town of Lago Agrio near the Colombian border, where he was discovered by Jose Villafuerte, one of the great names in the history of the Quito-based El Nacional club. Villafuerte knew he had struck gold and took Valencia to the capital in 2001.

Just three years later – at the age of 18 – Valencia was playing for Ecuador's Under-23 team in the Olympic qualifiers. He had a penalty saved in a shoot-out with Paraguay, and Ecuador were eliminated. Earlier this year he captained the Under-20s in the South American Championship in which Ecuador lost all four of their group games, scoring three goals and conceding 20. But there is no trauma, only lessons learned. "I've played some difficult games for the national team at Under-20 and Under-23 levels," he said before the Paraguay match, "so I believe I'm ready to take on the responsibility of being in the senior team's starting line-up."

Judging by Valencia's performances at the end of March, it is a responsibility that Suarez will probably be delighted to have him take on for many years to come.

Tim Vickery

FACT FILE

Country	Ecuador
Club	El Nacional
Born	August 5, 1985, in Lago Agrio
International debut	April 2004, v Honduras
International caps	7 (3 goals)

Victor VALDES

Barcelona keeper earning rave reviews under Rijkaard

KEEPER VICTOR VALDES celebrated a personal triumph as Barcelona, his hometown club, beat Deportivo 1-0 in La Coruna in March to maintain their runaway League lead. The clean sheet, secured with two superb late saves, meant the 23-year-old had gone 415 minutes without conceding a goal, breaking his previous best of 335 minutes.

That earlier run, in autumn 2003, had so impressed coach Frank Rijkaard that he decided to hand Valdes the No 1 jersey on a permanent basis, forcing the expected first-choice, Turkey's Rustu Recber, to seek pastures new.

The game against Deportivo marked Valdes' 100th appearance for Barca, but his progress at the club was far from smooth. He was spotted by Barca as a 10-year-old, playing for the kids' team of a supporters' group, but his chance of establishing himself in the youth ranks was denied when his family moved to Tenerife. But they returned to Barcelona three years later, and Valdes got back on board at the club, making it into the lower-division nursery team.

He was thrown his first-team debut by Louis Van Gaal in August 2002 because of an injury crisis – and frankly had little to do as Barca beat Legia Warsaw 3-0 at home in a Champions League qualifier. Valdes kept his place for the return, which Barca won 1-0 to progress to the group stage.

But that October the youngster blundered spectacularly during Barca's 2-1 Spanish Cup defeat by Valladolid. Van Gaal dropped him down to the B youth team, so Valdes stormed off home, slammed the front door shut and refused to come out for almost a week.

Having got on the wrong side of the Dutch coach, it was fortuitous for Valdes that Van Gaal was fired in the middle of that season. Caretaker Radomir Antic duly recalled the youngster, and Rijkaard, the new full-time incumbent, saw no reason to reverse that decision.

Regarding his recent fine form, Valdes says: "I don't think I'm the best goalkeeper in Europe but I do believe I play for the best team in Europe." And that despite Barca's elimination from the Champions League by Chelsea, a tie which, ironically, brought Valdes some rare criticism for showing indecision.

But although Valdes can't win European glory with Barca this term, his excellent form in their dominant domestic League campaign means he is almost certain to win the prestigious Zamora trophy, awarded to La Liga's best keeper. The last Barca keeper to manage that feat was the great Andoni Zubizarreta, in 1987.

Zubizarreta, like many of Barcelona's outstanding keepers over the years, is Basque, and Valdes is one of the few local boys to have made the grade, a sort of Catalan Iker Casillas. Now the question is whether he can ever replace the Real Madrid man in the Spanish national side. Of course, Barca president Joan Laporta is biased, but he reckons his keeper should have already had a chance with Spain. "Victor Valdes is the best goalkeeper in Europe," says Laporta, "and I can't understand why he isn't in the national squad."

Keir Radnedge

FACT FILE

Club Barcelona
Country Spain
Born January 14, 1982, in Barcelona

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'AN ENEMY OF FOOTBALL.' 'The special one.' With new opinions almost daily, what is the football supporter to believe?

It is plain to see that Jose Mourinho is 'different', but what will the 42-year-old's legacy in European football look like? Will he be celebrated as a unique talent or remembered as a whiner? Will he guide his teams to numerous trophies or have 'only' last season's Champions League to remind himself and soccer that the failed player from Setubal was actually half-decent?

At the time of writing his record is impressive. Failure as a manager has been fleeting, and in both Portugal and Spain, he has courted success. The same looks certain in England. Yet Mourinho has also flirted with controversy. The Ashley Cole row, 'whisper-gate', 'cheat' accusations, arguments with referees, opposing players… suddenly the golden sheen has disappeared, his Teflon exterior tarnished.

But is that correct? It may seem many have reached that opinion, but privately one wonders whether this is actually all part of Jose's game plan.

Does Mourinho gain strength from adversity? Is it a weapon in the dressing room? Is the moodiness yet entrenched resolve designed to unsettle opponents? It is rumoured he refuses to shave before games for this reason. Total football? Maybe Mourinho can create it. At home to Barcelona, he came close.

A second European Cup, should Chelsea reach the Final (or are allowed to), might restore that gleam and build that legacy. For now, we just have to wait and see.

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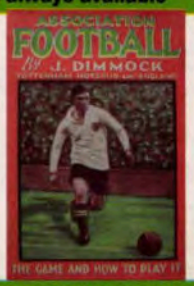

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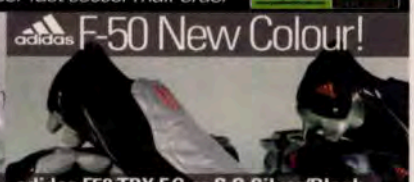

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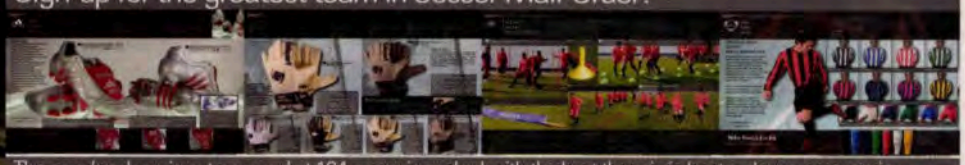

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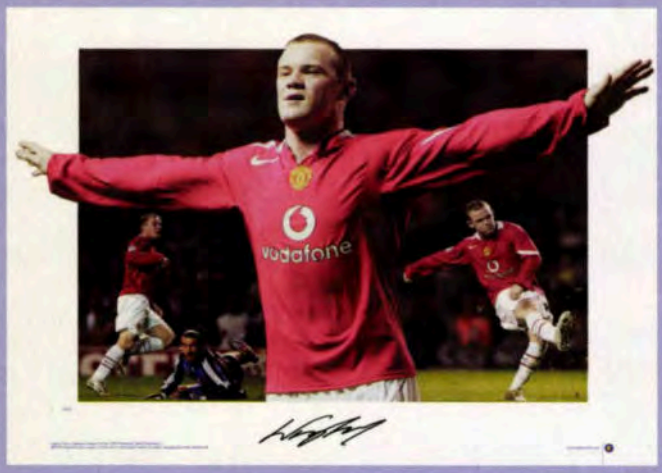

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WORLD SERVICE

2006 WORLD CUP QUALIFIERS

AFRICA

5 finals berths

Group 1

Mar 26 - Dakar
Senegal 6 (Fadiga 17, E H Diouf pen 42, 84, Abdoulaye Faye 52, H Camara 69, Moussa N'Diaye 73)
Liberia 1 (Tondo 88)
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 50,000. **Ref:** Shelmani (Lby)
Senegal: Sylva - Daf, Beye, Abdoulaye Faye, Diatta, Amdy Faye, Niang (Moussa N'Diaye 61), Fadiga (I Ba 78), Diawara, H Camara (Gueye 74), E H Diouf.

Mar 26 - Chililabombwe
Zambia 2 (Tana 1, Mbesuma 44)
Congo 0
HT: 2-0. **Ref:** Maillet (Sey)

Mar 27 - Bamako
Mali 1 (S Coulibaly 12)
Togo 2 (M Salifou 37, C-T Maman 90)
HT: 1-1. **Ref:** Agbenyega (Gha)

GROUP 1

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Togo	6	4	1	1	8	3	13
Zambia	6	4	1	1	8	4	13
Senegal	6	4	1	1	15	6	13
Congo	6	2	0	4	6	9	6
Liberia	6	1	1	4	2	13	4
Mali	6	0	2	4	4	8	2

05.06.04 Senegal-Congo 2-0
05.06.04 Zambia-Togo 1-0
06.06.04 Liberia-Mali 1-0
19.06.04 Mali-Zambia 1-1
20.06.04 Congo-Liberia 3-0
20.06.04 Togo-Senegal 3-1
03.07.04 Senegal-Zambia 1-0
04.07.04 Congo-Mali 1-0
04.07.04 Liberia-Togo 0-0
04.09.04 Zambia-Liberia 1-0
05.09.04 Mali-Senegal 2-2
05.09.04 Togo-Congo 2-0
10.10.04 Congo-Zambia 2-3
10.10.04 Liberia-Senegal 0-3
10.10.04 Togo-Mali 1-0
26.03.05 Senegal-Liberia 6-1
26.03.05 Zambia-Congo 2-0
27.03.05 Mali-Togo 1-2
03.06.05 Congo-Senegal
03.06.05 Mali-Liberia
03.06.05 Togo-Zambia
17.06.05 Liberia-Congo
17.06.05 Senegal-Togo
17.06.05 Zambia-Mali
02.09.05 Mali-Congo
02.09.05 Togo-Liberia
02.09.05 Zambia-Senegal
07.10.05 Congo-Togo
07.10.05 Liberia-Zambia
07.10.05 Senegal-Mali

Group 2

Mar 26 - Ouagadougou
Burkina Faso 1 (Dagano 70)
Cape Verde Islands 2 (Calo 48, 88)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Evehe (Cam)

Mar 26 - Johannesburg
South Africa 2 (Fortune pen 21, Pienaar 72)
Uganda 1 (Obua pen 66)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 20,000. **Ref:** Chukwujekwu (Nig)
South Africa: Vonk - Nzama, A Mokoena, Morris, Rammile, Fortune, Vilakazi (Siphika 88), Zuma (B McCarthy 75), Pienaar (Van Heerden 79), Bartlett, Buckley.

Mar 27 - Kinshasa
DR Congo 1 (Nonda 51)
Ghana 1 (Gyan 30)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Sowe (Gam)

GROUP 2

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
South Africa	6	4	0	2	7	6	12
Cape Verde Is	6	3	1	2	6	6	10
Ghana	6	2	3	1	7	3	9
DR Congo	6	2	3	1	6	5	9
Burkina Faso	6	2	0	4	6	8	6
Uganda	6	1	1	4	3	7	4

05.06.04 Burkina Faso-Ghana 1-0
05.06.04 South Africa-Cape Verde Is 2-1
05.06.04 Uganda-DR Congo 1-0
19.06.04 Cape Verde Is-Uganda 1-0
20.06.04 DR Congo-Burkina Faso 3-2
20.06.04 Ghana-South Africa 3-0
03.07.04 Cape Verde Is-DR Congo 1-1
03.07.04 South Africa-Burkina Faso 2-0
03.07.04 Uganda-Ghana 1-1
04.09.04 Burkina Faso-Uganda 2-0
05.09.04 DR Congo-South Africa 1-0
05.09.04 Ghana-Cape Verde Is 2-0
09.10.04 Cape Verde Is-Burkina Faso 1-0
10.10.04 Ghana-DR Congo 0-0
10.10.04 Uganda-South Africa 0-1
26.03.05 Burkina Faso-Cape Verde Is 1-2
26.03.05 South Africa-Uganda 2-1
27.03.05 DR Congo-Ghana 1-1
03.06.05 Cape Verde Is-South Africa
03.06.05 DR Congo-Uganda
03.06.05 Ghana-Burkina Faso
17.06.05 Burkina Faso-DR Congo
17.06.05 South Africa-Ghana
17.06.05 Uganda-Cape Verde Is
02.09.05 Burkina Faso-South Africa
02.09.05 DR Congo-Cape Verde Is
02.09.05 Ghana-Uganda
07.10.05 Cape Verde Is-Ghana
07.10.05 South Africa-DR Congo
07.10.05 Uganda-Burkina Faso

Group 3

Mar 27 - Yaounde
Cameroon 2 (Geremi 34, Webo 90)
Sudan 1 (Tambal 42)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 30,000. **Ref:** Diatta (Sen)
Sent off: Damar (Sudan) 66min
Cameroon: I C Kameni - Geremi, Song, Mettomo (Deumi 46), Atouba (Webo 72), Angbwa, Douala (Kome 58), Saidou, Olembe, Job, Eto'o.

Mar 27 - Cairo
Egypt 4 (Hossam 55, Moteab 56, 82, A Hassan 77)
Libya 1 (El-Fergani 52)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 30,000. **Ref:** Poulat (Fra)
Egypt: Abdelwahed El-Sayed - Fathi, Abd Rabo, Shawki, Goma'a, Aboutraika (El-Saqqa 86), Aboumesallem (Abdel Malek 57), Al-Tabei, Barakat, Hossam (A Hassan 73), Moteab.

Mar 27 - Abidjan
Ivory Coast 3 (Kalou 8, Drogba pen 18, 57)
Benin 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 35,000. **Ref:** Guirat (Tun)
Ivory Coast: Tizie - Boka, K Toure, Zokora, Guel (Fae 68), Zoro, C Domoraud, Tiene (Akale 60), Kalou, Drogba (B Kone 83), Dindane.

GROUP 3

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Ivory Coast	6	5	0	1	13	3	15
Cameroon	6	3	2	1	9	6	11
Egypt	6	3	1	2	15	10	10
Libya	6	3	1	2	8	8	10
Benin	6	0	2	4	6	14	2
Sudan	6	0	2	4	3	13	2

06.06.04 Cameroon-Benin 2-1
06.06.04 Ivory Coast-Libya 2-0
06.06.04 Sudan-Egypt 0-3
18.06.04 Libya-Cameroon 0-0
20.06.04 Benin-Sudan 1-1
20.06.04 Egypt-Ivory Coast 1-2
03.07.04 Sudan-Libya 0-1
04.07.04 Benin-Egypt 3-3
04.07.04 Cameroon-Ivory Coast 2-0
03.09.04 Libya-Benin 4-1
05.09.04 Egypt-Cameroon 3-2
05.09.04 Ivory Coast-Sudan 5-0
08.10.04 Libya-Egypt 2-1
09.10.04 Sudan-Cameroon 1-1
10.10.04 Benin-Ivory Coast 0-1
27.03.05 Cameroon-Sudan 2-1
27.03.05 Egypt-Libya 4-1
27.03.05 Ivory Coast-Benin 3-0
03.06.05 Benin-Cameroon
03.06.05 Egypt-Sudan
03.06.05 Libya-Ivory Coast
17.06.05 Cameroon-Libya
17.06.05 Ivory Coast-Egypt
17.06.05 Sudan-Benin
02.09.05 Egypt-Benin
02.09.05 Ivory Coast-Cameroon
02.09.05 Libya-Sudan
07.10.05 Benin-Libya
07.10.05 Cameroon-Egypt
07.10.05 Sudan-Ivory Coast

Group 4

Mar 26 - Port Harcourt
Nigeria 2 (Aghahowa 84, N Kanu 86)
Gabon 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 16,489. **Ref:** Hicuburundi (Brd)
Nigeria: Enyeama - Yobo, Udeze, Odiah, Utaka (Aiyegbeni 70), Lawal (Atanda 89), Nwaneri, Olofinjana, Okocha, Martins (N Kanu 77), Aghahowa.

Mar 27 - Oran
Algeria 1 (Boutabout 48)
Rwanda 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Abd El Fatah (Egy)

Mar 27 - Harare
Zimbabwe 2 (Kawondera 60, Mwaruwari 69)
Angola 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Codjia (Ben)

GROUP 4

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Nigeria	6	4	1	1	9	2	13
Angola	6	3	2	1	5	4	11
Zimbabwe	6	2	2	2	6	6	8
Gabon	6	1	3	2	8	9	6
Algeria	6	1	3	2	3	6	6
Rwanda	6	1	1	4	4	8	4

05.06.04 Algeria-Angola 0-0
05.06.04 Gabon-Zimbabwe 1-1
05.06.04 Nigeria-Rwanda 2-0
19.06.04 Rwanda-Gabon 3-1
20.06.04 Angola-Nigeria 1-0
20.06.04 Zimbabwe-Algeria 1-1
03.07.04 Gabon-Angola 2-2
03.07.04 Nigeria-Algeria 1-0
03.07.04 Rwanda-Zimbabwe 0-2
03.09.04 Zimbabwe-Nigeria 0-3
05.09.04 Algeria-Gabon 0-3
05.09.04 Angola-Rwanda 1-0
09.10.04 Gabon-Nigeria 1-1
09.10.04 Rwanda-Algeria 1-1
10.10.04 Angola-Zimbabwe 1-0
26.03.05 Nigeria-Gabon 2-0
27.03.05 Algeria-Rwanda 1-0
27.03.05 Zimbabwe-Angola 2-0
03.06.05 Angola-Algeria
03.06.05 Rwanda-Nigeria
03.06.05 Zimbabwe-Gabon
17.06.05 Algeria-Zimbabwe
17.06.05 Gabon-Rwanda
17.06.05 Nigeria-Angola
02.09.05 Algeria-Nigeria
02.09.05 Angola-Gabon
02.09.05 Zimbabwe-Rwanda
07.10.05 Gabon-Algeria
07.10.05 Nigeria-Zimbabwe
07.10.05 Rwanda-Angola

Group 5

Mar 26 - Nairobi
Kenya 1 (Oliech 45)
Botswana 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Buenkadila (DRC)

Mar 26 - Rabat
Morocco 1 (Y Hadji 62)
Guinea 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Coulibaly (Mli)
Sent off: Balde (Guinea) 42min
Morocco: Sinouh - Regragui, Ouaddou, El-Karkouri, Naybet, Zairi (Sektioui 68), Kharja (Yaacoubi 89), Safri, Diane (Bousaboun 65), Y Hadji, Chamakh.

Mar 26 - Tunis
Tunisia 7 (Guemamdia 3, Santos 13, 52, 75, 77, Clayton pen 61, Ghodhbane 79)
Malawi 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 30,000. **Ref:** Abdel Rahman (Sud)
Tunisia: Boumnijel - Hagui, H Trabelsi, Jaidi, Clayton (Yahia 78), Guemamdia (Ben Saada 62), Ghodhbane, Mnari (Bouazizi 55), Namouchi, Benachour, Santos.

GROUP 5

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Morocco	6	3	3	0	10	4	12
Kenya	5	3	0	2	8	10	9
Guinea	6	2	2	2	9	6	8
Tunisia	5	2	2	1	15	6	8
Botswana	6	2	0	4	5	11	6
Malawi	6	0	3	3	6	16	3

05.06.04 Malawi-Morocco 1-1
05.06.04 Tunisia-Botswana 4-1
19.06.04 Botswana-Malawi 2-0
20.06.04 Guinea-Tunisia 2-1
03.07.04 Botswana-Morocco 0-1
03.07.04 Malawi-Guinea 1-1
04.09.04 Kenya-Malawi 3-2
04.09.04 Morocco-Tunisia 1-1
05.09.04 Guinea-Botswana 4-0
09.10.04 Botswana-Kenya 2-1
09.10.04 Malawi-Tunisia 2-2
10.10.04 Guinea-Morocco 1-1
17.11.04 Kenya-Guinea 2-1
09.02.05 Morocco-Kenya 5-1
26.03.05 Kenya-Botswana 1-0
26.03.05 Morocco-Guinea 1-0
26.03.05 Tunisia-Malawi 7-0
03.06.05 Morocco-Malawi
03.06.05 Botswana-Tunisia
03.06.05 Guinea-Kenya
11.06.05 Tunisia-Guinea
17.06.05 Kenya-Morocco
17.06.05 Malawi-Botswana
17.08.05 Tunisia-Kenya
02.09.05 Kenya-Tunisia
02.09.05 Morocco-Botswana
02.09.05 Guinea-Malawi
07.10.05 Malawi-Kenya
07.10.05 Tunisia-Morocco
07.10.05 Botswana-Guinea

Group winners qualify for finals

ASIA

4.5 finals berths

2nd stage

Group A

Mar 25 - Kuwait City
Kuwait 2 (B Abdullah 7, 62)
Uzbekistan 1 (Geinrikh 77)
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Sun (Chn)

Focusing in...Romania's Mirel Radoi and Holland's Ruud Van Nistelrooy keep their eye on the ball

Mar 25 - Dammam
Saudi Arabia 2 (Khariri 29, Al-Qahtani pen 75)
South Korea 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 25,000. **Ref:** Mohd Salleh (Mly)
Saudi Arabia: Zaid - Fallatah, Al-Montasheri, Abushgeer (Al-Shlhoob 75), Khathran, Khariri, Al-Bahri, Al-Thaker, Al-Jassam (Al-Abdullah 83), Al-Qahtani (Al-Shamrani 86), Al-Jaber.
South Korea: Lee Woon-jae - Park Jae-hong, Kim Nam-il, Yoo Sang-chul (Chung Kyung-ho 69), Kim Dong-jin, Park Dong-hyuk, Park Ji-sung, Lee Young-pyo, Lee Chun-soo (Kim Do-heon 88), Lee Dong-gook, Seol Ki-hyeon (Namkung Do 75).

Mar 30 - Kuwait City
Kuwait 0
Saudi Arabia 0
Att: 25,000. **Ref:** Moradi (Irn)
Saudi Arabia: Zaid - Fallatah, Al-Montasheri, Abushgeer (Al-Shamrani 90), Khathran, Al-Bahri, Al-Thaker, Al-Jassam, Al-Abdullha, Al-Qahtani, Al-Jaber (Al-Shlhoob 73).

Mar 30 - Seoul
South Korea 2 (Lee Young-pyo 54, Lee Dong-gook 61)
Uzbekistan 1 (Geinrikh 78)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 62,857. **Ref:** Najm (Leb)
South Korea: Lee Woon-jae - You Kyoung-youl, Yoo Sang-chul, Park Ji-sung, Cha Doo-ri, Lee Young-pyo, Kim Dong-jin, Park Dong-hyuk, Kim Jin-kyu, Lee Dong-gook (Chung Kyung-ho 75), Seol Ki-hyeon (Namkung Do 85).

GROUP A

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
South Korea	3	2	0	1	4	3	6
Saudi Arabia	3	1	2	0	3	1	5
Kuwait	3	1	1	1	2	3	4
Uzbekistan	3	0	1	2	3	5	1

09.02.05	South Korea-Kuwait 2-0
09.02.05	Uzbekistan-Saudi Arabia 1-1
25.03.05	Kuwait-Uzbekistan 2-1
25.03.05	Saudi Arabia-South Korea 2-0
30.03.05	Kuwait-Saudi Arabia 0-0
30.03.05	South Korea-Uzbekistan 2-1
03.06.05	Saudi Arabia-Kuwait
03.06.05	Uzbekistan-South Korea
08.06.05	Kuwait-South Korea
08.06.05	Saudi Arabia-Uzbekistan
17.08.05	South Korea-Saudi Arabia
17.08.05	Uzbekistan-Kuwait

Group B

Mar 25 - Tehran
Iran 2 (Hashemian 25, 75)
Japan 1 (Fukunishi 66)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 110,000. **Ref:** Maidin (Sin)
Iran: Mirzapour - Kaebi, Rezaei, Golmohammadi, Nosrati, Mahdavikia, Karimi (Vahedinikbakht 78), Nekounam, Zandi (Alavi 65), Daei (Navidkia 42), Hashemian.
Japan: Narazaki - Kaji, Miyamoto, Nakazawa, Miura, Ono (Ogasawara 79), Fukunishi, Nakamura, H Nakata, Takahara (Oguro 82), Tamada (Yanagisawa 62).

Mar 25 - Pyongyang
North Korea 1 (Pak Song-kwan 63)
Bahrain 2 (H Ali 8, 58)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Rungklay (Tha)

Mar 30 - Saitama
Japan 1 (Salmeen og 72)
Bahrain 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 67,549. **Ref:** Irmatov (Uzb)
Japan: Narazaki - Tanaka, Miyamoto, Alex, Nakazawa, Kaji, Fukunishi, H Nakata, Nakamura (Inamoto 90), T Suzuki (Tamada 69), Takahara.

Mar 30 - Pyongyang
North Korea 0
Iran 2 (An Yong-hak og 34, Nekounam 79)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 50,000. **Ref:** Kousa (Syr)
Sent off: Nam Song-chol (North Korea) 85min
Iran: Mirzapour - Kaebi, Golmohammadi, Rezaei, Zare, Nekounam, Mahdavikia, Zandi (Vahedinikbakht 62), Alavi, Karimi, Hashemian (Navidkia 90).

GROUP B

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Iran	3	2	1	0	4	1	7
Japan	3	2	0	1	4	3	6
Bahrain	3	1	1	1	2	2	4
North Korea	3	0	0	3	2	6	0

09.02.05	Bahrain-Iran 0-0
09.02.05	Japan-North Korea 2-1
25.03.05	Iran-Japan 2-1
25.03.05	North Korea-Bahrain 1-2
30.03.05	Japan-Bahrain 1-0
30.03.05	North Korea-Iran 0-2
03.06.05	Iran-North Korea
03.06.05	Bahrain-Japan
08.06.05	Iran-Bahrain
08.06.05	North Korea-Japan
17.08.05	Bahrain-North Korea
17.08.05	Japan-Iran

Group winners and runners-up qualify for finals. The two third-placed teams meet in a two-leg play-off, the winners of which meet the fourth-placed CONCACAF team over two legs for a place in finals

Asian play-off matchdays:
Sep 3 (1st leg), Oct 8 (2nd leg), 2005

CONCACAF

3.5 finals berths

3rd stage

Mar 26 - San Jose
Costa Rica 2 (Wilson pen 40, Myrie 90)
Panama 1 (Brown pen 58)
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Rodriguez (Mex)
Played behind closed doors
Costa Rica: Mesen - Marin, G Martinez, L Gonzalez, Wallace, Lopez, Hernandez (Myrie 61), Sequeira, Centeno, Wilson (Sunsing 63), Wanchope (Ledezma 73). *Sent off: Lopez 46min.*
Panama: Penedo - Rivera, Moreno, A Torres, Baloy, Gomez (Solis 81), Blanco, Phillips (Aguilar 82), Medina, Garces, Brown (Rodriguez 86).

Mar 26 - Guatemala City
Guatemala 5 (Ramirez 17, Ruiz 30, 38, Pezzarossi 78, 87)
Trinidad & Tobago 1 (Edwards 32)
HT: 3-1. **Att:** 22,506. **Ref:** Stott (USA)
Guatemala: Trigueno - Melgar, Chen (Quinonez 32), Cabrera, Thompson, Romero (Davila 80), Ramirez, Figueroa, Martinez, Pezzarossi, Ruiz (Plata 86).
Trinidad & Tobago: Hislop - Henry, Sancho, Fitzpatrick (Sam 48), Eve, Edwards, Lawrence, Jones (Nakhid 68), A Pierre, S John, Yorke.

Mar 27 - Mexico City
Mexico 2 (Borgetti 30, Naelson 33)
United States 1 (Lewis 59)
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 84,000. **Ref:** Sibrian (ES)
Mexico: O Sanchez - Carmona, Marquez, Osorio, Salcido, Lozano (L Perez 69), Pardo, Naelson, Fonseca, C Blanco (R Morales 69), Borgetti (A Medina 65).
United States: Keller - Bocanegra (Noonan 75), Berhalter, Onyewu, Cherundolo (McBride 82), Mastroeni (Ralston 71), Reyna, Lewis, Beasley, Donovan, Johnson.

Mar 30 - Panama City
Panama 1 (Tejada 75)
Mexico 1 (R Morales 26)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 15,000. **Ref:** Pineda (Hnd)
Panama: Penedo - Moreno, Baloy, A Torres, Gun, Phillips (Solanilla 88), Blanco, Solis (Mitre 79), Medina, Garces, Brown (Tejada 53).
Mexico: O Sanchez - Salcido, Osorio, Marquez, Carmona, Altamirano, Pardo, R Morales (Pineda 56), Naelson, C Blanco (R Garcia 58), Borgetti (A Medina 70). *Sent off: Pardo 57min.*

Mar 30 - Port-of-Spain
Trinidad & Tobago 0
Costa Rica 0
Att: 8,000. **Ref:** Navarro (Can)
Trinidad & Tobago: Ince - Edwards (Sam 71), Lawrence, Charles, Rojas, A Pierre, Spann (Fitzpatrick 63), Yorke, Eve, Glenn (N Pierre 74), S John.
Costa Rica: Mesen - Wallace, Marin, G Martinez, L Gonzalez, Sequeira, Badilla, Centeno, A Solis (Hernandez 50), Rojas (Wanchope 67), Wilson (Herron 63).

Mar 30 - Birmingham
United States 2 (Johnson 11, Ralston 69)
Guatemala 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 31,624. **Ref:** Ramdhan (T&T)
United States: Keller - Bocanegra, Cherundolo, Onyewu, Gibbs, Mastroeni, Ralston, Lewis (Noonan 85), Donovan (Dempsey 90), Johnson, Ching (Wolff 79).
Guatemala: Trigueno - Melgar, Chen (Davila 46), Cabrera, Martinez, Thompson, Romero (Quinonez 46), Ramirez, Rodriguez (Sandoval 69), Pezzarossi, Ruiz.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Mexico	3	2	1	0	5	3	7
United States	3	2	0	1	5	3	6
Guatemala	3	1	1	1	5	3	4
Costa Rica	3	1	1	1	3	3	4
Panama	3	0	2	1	2	3	2
Trinidad & Tob	3	0	1	2	2	7	1

09.02.05	Costa Rica-Mexico 1-2
09.02.05	Panama-Guatemala 0-0
09.02.05	Trinidad & Tob-United States 1-2
26.03.05	Costa Rica-Panama 2-1
26.03.05	Guatemala-Trinidad & Tob 5-1
27.03.05	Mexico-United States 2-1
30.03.05	Panama-Mexico 1-1
30.03.05	Trinidad & Tob-Costa Rica 0-0
30.03.05	United States-Guatemala 2-0
04.06.05	Guatemala-Mexico
04.06.05	Trinidad & Tob-Panama
04.06.05	United States-Costa Rica
08.06.05	Costa Rica-Guatemala
08.06.05	Mexico-Trinidad & Tob
08.06.05	Panama-United States
17.08.05	Guatemala-Panama
17.08.05	Mexico-Costa Rica
17.08.05	United States-Trinidad & Tob
03.09.05	Panama-Costa Rica
03.09.05	Trinidad & Tob-Guatemala
03.09.05	United States-Mexico
07.09.05	Costa Rica-Trinidad & Tob
07.09.05	Guatemala-United States
07.09.05	Mexico-Panama
08/09.10.05	Costa Rica-United States
08/09.10.05	Mexico-Guatemala
08/09.10.05	Panama-Trinidad & Tob
12.10.05	Guatemala-Costa Rica
12.10.05	Trinidad & Tob-Mexico
12.10.05	United States-Panama

Top three qualify for finals. The fourth-placed team meet the winners of the Asian play-off over two legs for a place in finals

EUROPE

14 finals berths (including hosts Germany, who qualify automatically)

Group 1

Mar 26 - Yerevan
Armenia 2 (Ara Hakopyan 32, R Hachatryan 73)
Andorra 1 (Silva 57)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 9,560. **Ref:** Attard (Mlt)
Armenia: Berezovski - Aleksanyan, Arzumanyan, K Dokhoyan, Melikyan, R Hachatryan, Ara Hakopyan (Voskanyan 90), Artavazd Karamian (Agvan Mkrtchyan 72), Nazaryan (Yenebyan 73), Shakgeldyan, Mkhitaryan.
Andorra: Koldo - Ayala, Escura, Txema, Fernandez, Sonejee, Pujol, Sivera (Juli Sanchez 89), Silva (Javi Sanchez 90), Jimenez (Garcia 79), Ruiz Gonzalez.

Mar 26 - Teplice
Czech Republic 4 (Baros 7, Rosicky 34, Polak 58, Lokvenc 87)
Finland 3 (Litmanen 46, Riihilahti 73, Johansson 79)
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 16,200. **Ref:** Larsen (Den)
Czech Republic: Cech - Jiranek, Bolf, Ujfalusi, Jankulovski, Poborsky, Polak (Jun 82), Rosicky, Sionko (Jarosik 73), Baros (Plasil 52), Lokvenc.
Finland: Jaaskelainen - Pasanen, Hyypia, Tihinen, Kopteff, Riihilahti, Ilola, Nurmela, Litmanen (Johansson 78), Kolkka (Eremenko 60), S Kuqi.

Mar 26 - Bucharest
Romania 0
Holland 2 (Cocu 1, Babel 85)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 19,000. **Ref:** Medina Cantalejo (Spa)
Romania: Lobont - Ogararu, Radoi, Chivu, Marin, Ghioane (Piesan 46), Pancu, D Munteanu, F Petre, V Moldovan (Cristea 69), Ilie (Bucur 85).
Holland: Van der Sar - Kromkamp, Boulahrouz, Mathijsen, Van Bronckhorst, Van Bommel (Maduro 73), Landzaat, Cocu, Kuijt (Castelen 90), Van Nistelrooy, Robben (Babel 23).

Mar 30 - Andorra La Vella
Andorra 0
Czech Republic 4 (Jankulovski pen 31, Baros 40, Lokvenc 53, Rosicky pen 90)
HT: 0-2. **Att:** 850. **Ref:** Messner (Aut)
Andorra: Koldo - Txema (Ayala 61), Escura, I Lima, Sonejee, Pujol, A Lima, Sivera, Ruiz Gonzalez (Fernandez 67), Bernaus, Silva (Juli Sanchez 66).
Czech Republic: Cech - Jiranek (Plasil 76), Rozehnal, Ujfalusi, Jankulovski, Poborsky, Tyce (Polak 46), Rosicky, Vachousek, Baros (Jun 61), Lokvenc.

Mar 30 - Eindhoven
Holland 2 (Castelen 3, Van Nistelrooy 34)
Armenia 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 33,000. **Ref:** Trefoloni (Ita)
Holland: Van der Sar - Kromkamp, Bouma, Mathijsen, Van Bronckhorst, Van Bommel, Landzaat (Van der Vaart 50), Cocu, Castelen (Babel 50), Van Nistelrooy, Kuijt (Vennegoor of Hesselink 80).
Armenia: Berezovski - Melikyan, K Dokhoyan, Hovsepyan, Arzumanyan (Tadevosyan 85), Grigoryan (Artavazd Karamian 60), R Hachatryan, Shakgeldyan, Voskanyan, Ara Hakopyan (Nazaryan 46), Mkhitaryan.

Mar 30 - Skopje
Macedonia 1 (Maznov 31)
Romania 2 (Mitea 18, 58)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 10,000. **Ref:** Ovrebo (Nor)
Macedonia: Milosevski - R Popov, Sedloski, Vasoski, Petrov (Bozinovski 46), Krstev, Sumulikoski (Ignatov 73), A Mitreski, Grozdanovski (Bajevski 82), Maznov, Jancevski.
Romania: Lobont - Contra, Radoi, Chivu (Ghionea 46), Rat, F Petre, Galca, D Munteanu, Mitea (Bucur 70), Pancu, V Moldovan (Cristea 79)

GROUP 1

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Holland	6	5	1	0	14	3	16
Czech Republic	6	5	0	1	14	5	15
Romania	7	4	1	2	12	8	13
Finland	6	3	0	3	13	10	9
Macedonia	7	1	2	4	7	9	5
Armenia	7	1	1	5	4	15	4
Andorra	7	1	1	5	3	17	4

18.08.04	Macedonia-Armenia 3-0
18.08.04	Romania-Finland 2-1
04.09.04	Finland-Andorra 3-0
04.09.04	Romania-Macedonia 2-1
08.09.04	Andorra-Romania 1-5
08.09.04	Armenia-Finland 0-2
08.09.04	Holland-Czech Republic 2-0
09.10.04	Czech Republic-Romania 1-0
09.10.04	Finland-Armenia 3-1
09.10.04	Macedonia-Holland 2-2
13.10.04	Andorra-Macedonia 1-0
13.10.04	Armenia-Czech Republic 0-3
13.10.04	Holland-Finland 3-1
17.11.04	Andorra-Holland 0-3
17.11.04	Armenia-Romania 1-1
17.11.04	Macedonia-Czech Republic 0-2
09.02.05	Macedonia-Andorra 0-0
26.03.05	Armenia-Andorra 2-1
26.03.05	Czech Republic-Finland 4-3
26.03.05	Romania-Holland 0-2
30.03.05	Andorra-Czech Republic 0-4
30.03.05	Holland-Armenia 2-0
30.03.05	Macedonia-Romania 1-2
04.06.05	Armenia-Macedonia
04.06.05	Czech Republic-Andorra
04.06.05	Holland-Romania
08.06.05	Czech Republic-Macedonia
08.06.05	Finland-Holland
08.06.05	Romania-Armenia
17.08.05	Macedonia-Finland
17.08.05	Romania-Andorra
03.09.05	Andorra-Finland
03.09.05	Armenia-Holland
03.09.05	Romania-Czech Republic
07.09.05	Czech Republic-Armenia
07.09.05	Finland-Macedonia
07.09.05	Holland-Andorra
08.10.05	Czech Republic-Holland
08.10.05	Finland-Romania
12.10.05	Andorra-Armenia
12.10.05	Finland-Czech Republic
12.10.05	Holland-Macedonia

Group 2

Mar 26 - Copenhagen
Denmark 3 (Moller 8, 47, Poulsen 34)
Kazakhstan 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 20,980. **Ref:** Gilewski (Pol)
Denmark: Sorensen - Poulsen, Priske, Laursen, N Jensen, Helveg, D Jensen (C Jensen 46), Gronkjaer (Silberbauer 74), Tomasson (Perez 46), Jorgensen, Moller.
Kazakhstan: Novikov - Baltiyev, Avdeyev, Smakov, Karpovits, Chichulin (Larim 46), Lyapkin, Familtsev, Travin (Baizhanov 56), Rodionov, Utabayev (Dubinski 78).

Mar 26 - Tbilisi
Georgia 1 (Asatiani 22)
Greece 3 (Kapsis 43, Vryzas 45, Giannakopoulos 53)
HT: 1-2. **Att:** 25,000. **Ref:** Rosetti (Ita)
Georgia: Lomaia - Mjavanadze, Kaladze, Khizaneishvili, Kvirkvelia, Khizanishvili, Gogua (Tskitishvili 46), Asatiani, Kobiashvili, Demetradze, S Arveladze (A Iashvili 62).
Greece: Nikopolidis - Seitaridis, Kapsis, Katsouranis, Basinas, Zagorakis, Goumas, Karagounis, Giannakopoulos, Vryzas, Haristeas.

Mar 26 - Istanbul
Turkey 2 (Necati pen 3, E Beqiri og 5)
Albania 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 32,000. **Ref:** Plautz (Aut)
Turkey: Rustu - Koray, Tolga, Ibrahim Toroman, Umit Ozat, Serkan, Basturk, Emre Belozoglu (Bulent Korkmaz 84), Hamit Altintop (Gokdeniz 76), Necati, Fatih Tekke (Ayhan 63).
Albania: Lika - E Beqiri, Dallku, Cana, Aliaj, K Duro (Bushi 79), Haxhi, Lala, Skela, Bogdani, Tare.

Mar 30 - Tbilisi
Georgia 2 (Amisulashvili 13, A Iashvili 39)
Turkey 5 (Tolga 11, Fatih Tekke 19, 35, Koray 72, Tuncay 89)
HT: 2-3. **Att:** 28,000. **Ref:** Hauge (Nor)
Georgia: Devadze (Lomaia 21) - Asatiani, Gogua, Kobiashvili, Khizaneishvili (Salukvadze 18), A Iashvili, Ashvetia, Amisulashvili, Tskitishvili (Burduli 76), Mjavanadze, Kaladze. *Sent off: Gogua 82min.*
Turkey: Rustu - Ibrahim Toroman, Tolga, Hamit Altintop, Koray, Umit Ozat, Emre Belozoglu, Gokdeniz, Basturk (Huseyin 46), Fatih Tekke (Halil Altintop 88), Necati (Tuncay 63).

Mar 30 - Piraeus
Greece 2 (Haristeas 34, Karagounis 85)
Albania 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 31,700. **Ref:** Layec (Fra)
Greece: Nikopolidis - Seitaridis, Katsouranis, Zagorakis, Goumas, Kyrgiakos, Basinas, Karagounis, Giannakopoulos (I Amanatidis 88), Vryzas (Gekas 90), Haristeas.
Albania: Lika - E Beqiri, Osmani, Cana, Skela, Lala (Rraklli 46), Muka, K Duro (Dallku 83), Bogdani (Tare 65), Haxhi, Lici.

Mar 30 - Kiev
Ukraine 1 (Voronin 67)
Denmark 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 55,000. **Ref:** Michel (Slk)
Ukraine: Shovkovskyi - Nesmachnyi, Sviderskyi, Tymoshchuk, Yezerskyi, Rusol, Kosyrin (Bielik 60; Radchenko 84), Husiev, Voronin (Matiukhin 90), Vorobei, Husin.
Denmark: Sorensen - Poulsen, Priske, Kroldrup, N Jensen (Moller 70), Helveg, Gravesen, Gronkjaer, Tomasson, Jorgensen (C Jensen 84), Rommedahl (Silberbauer 75).

GROUP 2

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Ukraine	7	5	2	0	12	3	17
Greece	7	4	2	1	12	6	14
Turkey	7	3	3	1	13	7	12
Denmark	7	2	3	2	10	7	9
Albania	7	2	0	5	3	11	6
Georgia	6	1	2	3	8	13	5
Kazakhstan	5	0	0	5	2	13	0

04.09.04	Albania-Greece	2-1
04.09.04	Denmark-Ukraine	1-1
04.09.04	Turkey-Georgia	1-1
08.09.04	Georgia-Albania	2-0
08.09.04	Greece-Turkey	0-0
08.09.04	Kazakhstan-Ukraine	1-2
09.10.04	Albania-Denmark	0-2
09.10.04	Turkey-Kazakhstan	4-0
09.10.04	Ukraine-Greece	1-1
13.10.04	Denmark-Turkey	1-1
13.10.04	Kazakhstan-Albania	0-1
13.10.04	Ukraine-Georgia	2-0
17.11.04	Georgia-Denmark	2-2
17.11.04	Greece-Kazakhstan	3-1
17.11.04	Turkey-Ukraine	0-3
09.02.05	Albania-Ukraine	0-2
09.02.05	Greece-Denmark	2-1
26.03.05	Denmark-Kazakhstan	3-0
26.03.05	Georgia-Greece	1-3
26.03.05	Turkey-Albania	2-0
30.03.05	Georgia-Turkey	2-5
30.03.05	Greece-Albania	2-0
30.03.05	Ukraine-Denmark	1-0
04.06.05	Albania-Georgia	
04.06.05	Turkey-Greece	
04.06.05	Ukraine-Kazakhstan	
08.06.05	Denmark-Albania	
08.06.05	Greece-Ukraine	
08.06.05	Kazakhstan-Turkey	
17.08.05	Kazakhstan-Georgia	
03.09.05	Albania-Kazakhstan	
03.09.05	Georgia-Ukraine	
03.09.05	Turkey-Denmark	
07.09.05	Denmark-Georgia	
07.09.05	Kazakhstan-Greece	
07.09.05	Ukraine-Turkey	
08.10.05	Denmark-Greece	
08.10.05	Georgia-Kazakhstan	
08.10.05	Ukraine-Albania	
12.10.05	Albania-Turkey	
12.10.05	Greece-Georgia	
12.10.05	Kazakhstan-Denmark	

Group 3

Mar 26 - Tallinn
Estonia 1 (Oper 58)
Slovakia 2 (Mintal 59, Reiter 66)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 3,051. **Ref:** Frojdfeldt (Swe)
Estonia: Kotenko - Allas, Stepanov, Jaager, U Rooba (Klavan 79), Terehhov (Teever 79), Reim, Lindpere (Zahhovaiko 86), Kruglov, Viikmae, Oper.
Slovakia: Contofalsky - Zabavnik, Valachovic, Varga, Petras, Kisel (Jakubko 54), Hlinka, Karhan, Michalik (Reiter 46), Mintal, S Nemeth (Cech 90).

Mar 26 - Vaduz
Liechtenstein 1 (T Beck 40)
Russia 2 (Kerzhakov 23, Karyaka 37)
HT: 1-2. **Att:** 2,500. **Ref:** Berntsen (Nor)
Liechtenstein: Jehle - D Hasler, Ritter, Telser, Michael Stocklasa, R Beck (Vogt 60), Gerster, T Beck, F Burgmeier, D'Elia (R Buchel 53), M Frick.
Russia: Malafeev - A Berezutsky, V Berezutsky, Evseev, Ignashevich, Arshavin (Sychev 55), V Bystrov (Izmailov 67), Karyaka, Khokhlov (Aldonin 78), Loskov, Kerzhakov.

Mar 30 - Tallinn
Estonia 1 (Terehhov 64)
Russia 1 (Arshavin 18)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 9,300. **Ref:** Paparesta (Ita)
Estonia: Kotenko - Allas, Stepanov, Jaager, Kruglov, Rahn, Terehhov (Smirnov 83), Reim, Viikmae (Teever 90), Oper, Lindpere (Klavan 24).
Russia: Akinfeev - A Berezutsky, V Berezutsky, Smertin, Zhirkov (Karyaka 72), Ignashevich, V Bystrov, Khokhlov (Kolodin 63), Arshavin (Sychev 67), Loskov, Kerzhakov.

Mar 30 - Riga
Latvia 4 (Bleidelis 33, Laizans pen 38, Verpakovskis 73, 90)
Luxembourg 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 8,400. **Ref:** Kovacic (Cro)
Latvia: Kolinko - Stepanovs, Astafjevs, Zirnis, Laizans, Smirnovs, Morozs, Bleidelis (Miholaps 68), Rubins (Zavoronkovs 39), Verpakovskis, Prohorenkovs (Rimkus 82).
Luxembourg: Oberweis - Schauls (Lang 81), Heinz, Hoffmann, Strasser, Ferreira, Peters (C Leweck 50), Remy, Durrer, Pace (Mannon 88), Collette.

Mar 30 - Bratislava
Slovakia 1 (Karhan pen 8)
Portugal 1 (Helder Postiga 62)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 28,000. **Ref:** Sars (Fra)
Slovakia: Contofalsky - Zabavnik, Petras, Varga, Michalik (Had 37), S Nemeth, Karhan, Hanek (Kisel 81), Hlinka, Mintal, Jakubko (Reiter 65).
Portugal: Ricardo - Paulo Ferreira (Miguel 64), Ricardo Carvalho, Jorge Andrade, Nuno Valente, Maniche, Cristiano Ronaldo, Deco, Costinha, Simao (Hugo Viana 90), Pauleta (Helder Postiga 57).

GROUP 3

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Portugal	6	4	2	0	21	4	14
Slovakia	6	4	2	0	18	5	14
Russia	6	3	2	1	13	10	11
Latvia	6	3	1	2	14	12	10
Estonia	7	2	2	3	10	14	8
Liechtenstein	6	1	1	4	9	16	4
Luxembourg	7	0	0	7	4	28	0

18.08.04	Liechtenstein-Estonia	1-2
18.08.04	Slovakia-Luxembourg	3-1
04.09.04	Estonia-Luxembourg	4-0
04.09.04	Latvia-Portugal	0-2
04.09.04	Russia-Slovakia	1-1
08.09.04	Luxembourg-Latvia	3-4
08.09.04	Portugal-Estonia	4-0
08.09.04	Slovakia-Liechtenstein	7-0
09.10.04	Liechtenstein-Portugal	2-2
09.10.04	Luxembourg-Russia	0-4
09.10.04	Slovakia-Latvia	4-1
13.10.04	Latvia-Estonia	2-2
13.10.04	Luxembourg-Liechtenstein	0-4
13.10.04	Portugal-Russia	7-1
17.11.04	Liechtenstein-Latvia	1-3
17.11.04	Luxembourg-Portugal	0-5
17.11.04	Russia-Estonia	4-0
26.03.05	Estonia-Slovakia	1-2
26.03.05	Liechtenstein-Russia	1-2
30.03.05	Estonia-Russia	1-1
30.03.05	Latvia-Luxembourg	4-0
30.03.05	Slovakia-Portugal	1-1
04.06.05	Estonia-Liechtenstein	
04.06.05	Portugal-Slovakia	
04.06.05	Russia-Latvia	
08.06.05	Estonia-Portugal	
08.06.05	Latvia-Liechtenstein	
08.06.05	Luxembourg-Slovakia	
17.08.05	Latvia-Russia	
17.08.05	Liechtenstein-Slovakia	
03.09.05	Estonia-Latvia	
03.09.05	Portugal-Luxembourg	
03.09.05	Russia-Liechtenstein	
07.09.05	Latvia-Slovakia	
07.09.05	Liechtenstein-Luxembourg	
07.09.05	Russia-Portugal	
08.10.05	Portugal-Liechtenstein	
08.10.05	Russia-Luxembourg	
08.10.05	Slovakia-Estonia	
12.10.05	Luxembourg-Estonia	
12.10.05	Portugal-Latvia	
12.10.05	Slovakia-Russia	

Group 4

Mar 26 - Saint-Denis
France 0
Switzerland 0
Att: 79,373. **Ref:** De Santis (Ita)
France: Barthez - Sagnol, Boumsong, Givet, Gallas, Giuly, Pedretti, Vieira, Dhorasoo (Meriem 59), Wiltord (Govou 82), Trezeguet.
Switzerland: Zuberbuhler - Degen, Muller, Senderos, Spycher, Lonfat (Huggel 28), Vogel, Gygax (Henchoz 90), Ziegler (Magnin 69), Cabanas, Frei.

Mar 26 - Tel Aviv
Israel 1 (Suan 90)
Rep Ireland 1 (Morrison 4)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 32,150. **Ref:** Ivanov (Rus)
Israel: Awat - Afek (Nimni 65), Ben-Haim, Gershon, Benado, Keisi, Badir, Tal (Balili 65), Benayoun, Katan, Golan (Suan 74).
Rep Ireland: Given - Carr, Cunningham, O'Brien, O'Shea, Finnan, Roy Keane, Kilbane, Duff, Morrison (Holland 85), Robbie Keane.

Mar 30 - Tel Aviv
Israel 1 (Badir 83)
France 1 (Trezeguet 50)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 32,150. **Ref:** Merk (Ger)
Israel: Awat - Keisi, Ben-Haim, Saban, Gershon, Badir, Tal (Afek 67), Katan, Benayoun, Nimni, Balili.
France: Barthez - Sagnol, Boumsong, Givet, Gallas, Diarra, Vieira, Malouda, Pedretti, Trezeguet, Wiltord (Dhorasoo 90). *Sent off: Trezeguet 55min.*

Mar 30 - Zurich
Switzerland 1 (Frei 88)
Cyprus 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 16,066. **Ref:** Dougal (Sco)
Switzerland: Zuberbuhler - Degen, Muller, Senderos, Spycher (Magnin 82), Lonfat (H Yakin 62), Vogel, Gygax, Cabanas, Ziegler (Vonlanthen 41), Frei.
Cyprus: N Panayiotou - Elia, Louka, Lambrou, Garpozis (Aloneftis 90), Charalambidis, Makrides (Satsias 65), C Michael, Krassas (Yiasoumi 80), Okkas, M Constantinou. *Sent off: N Panayiotou 90min.*

GROUP 4

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
France	6	2	4	0	5	1	10
Israel	6	2	4	0	8	6	10
Switzerland	5	2	3	0	10	3	9
Rep Ireland	5	2	3	0	7	2	9
Cyprus	6	0	1	5	4	12	1
Faroe Islands	4	0	1	3	2	12	1

04.09.04	France-Israel	0-0
04.09.04	Rep Ireland-Cyprus	3-0
04.09.04	Switzerland-Faroe Islands	6-0
08.09.04	Faroe Islands-France	0-2
08.09.04	Israel-Cyprus	2-1
08.09.04	Switzerland-Rep Ireland	1-1
09.10.04	Cyprus-Faroe Islands	2-2
09.10.04	France-Rep Ireland	0-0
09.10.04	Israel-Switzerland	2-2
13.10.04	Cyprus-France	0-2
13.10.04	Rep Ireland-Faroe Islands	2-0
17.11.04	Cyprus-Israel	1-2
26.03.05	France-Switzerland	0-0
26.03.05	Israel-Rep Ireland	1-1
30.03.05	Israel-France	1-1
30.03.05	Switzerland-Cyprus	1-0
04.06.05	Faroe Islands-Switzerland	
04.06.05	Rep Ireland-Israel	
08.06.05	Faroe Islands-Rep Ireland	
17.08.05	Faroe Islands-Cyprus	
03.09.05	France-Faroe Islands	
03.09.05	Switzerland-Israel	
07.09.05	Cyprus-Switzerland	
07.09.05	Faroe Islands-Israel	
07.09.05	Rep Ireland-France	
08.10.05	Cyprus-Rep Ireland	
08.10.05	Switzerland-France	
08.10.05	Israel-Faroe Islands	
12.10.05	France-Cyprus	
12.10.05	Rep Ireland-Switzerland	

Group 5

Mar 26 - Milan
Italy 2 (Pirlo 35, 85)
Scotland 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 41,000. **Ref:** Vassaras (Gre)
Italy: Buffon - Bonera, Materazzi, Cannavaro, Chiellini, Pirlo, Camoranesi, Gattuso, Totti (De Rossi 71), Gilardino, Cassano (Toni 80).
Scotland: Douglas (Gordon 39) - McNamara, Pressley, Weir, Naysmith, G Caldwell, Hartley (McCann 76), Ferguson, Quashie, McCulloch, K Miller (O'Connor 85).

Mar 30 - Chisinau
Moldova 0
Norway 0
Att: 6,000. **Ref:** Meyer (Ger)
Moldova: Hmaruc - Savinov, Lascencov (Covalenco 84), Olexici, Catinsus, Priganiuc, Epureanu (Barisev 80), Ivanov, Rogaciov (Frunza 89), Boret, Dadu.
Norway: Myhre - Bergdolmo, Hagen, Lundekvam, Riise, Solli, Svindal Larsen, Hoseth (Carew 59), Iversen, Rushfeldt (Karadas 80), Gamst Pedersen.

Mar 30 - Celje
Slovenia 1 (Rodic 44)
Belarus 1 (Kulchy 48)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 6,450. **Ref:** Al-Ghamdi (Sau)
Slovenia: Handanovic - Cipot, Filekovic (Siljak 56), M Mavric, Knavs, N Ceh, Komac, Cimirotic (Rodic 27), Acimovic, Seslar (Pokorn 71), Ilic.
Belarus: Zhevnov - Kulchy, Kovba, Omelyanchuk, Lavrik, Gurenko, Khatskevich (Ostrovski 85), Bialkevich, Romaschenko (Kalachov 76), A Hleb, Kutuzov (Bulyga 64).

GROUP 5

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Italy	5	4	0	1	9	5	12
Norway	5	2	2	1	6	3	8
Slovenia	5	2	2	1	5	4	8
Belarus	4	1	2	1	9	6	5
Scotland	4	0	2	2	1	4	2
Moldova	5	0	2	3	1	9	2

04.09.04	Italy-Norway	2-1
04.09.04	Slovenia-Moldova	3-0
08.09.04	Moldova-Italy	0-1
08.09.04	Norway-Belarus	1-1
08.09.04	Scotland-Slovenia	0-0

09.10.04	Belarus-Moldova	4-0
09.10.04	Scotland-Norway	0-1
09.10.04	Slovenia-Italy	1-0
13.10.04	Italy-Belarus	4-3
13.10.04	Moldova-Scotland	1-1
13.10.04	Norway-Slovenia	3-0
26.03.05	Italy-Scotland	2-0
30.03.05	Moldova-Norway	0-0
30.03.05	Slovenia-Belarus	1-1
04.06.05	Belarus-Slovenia	
04.06.05	Norway-Italy	
04.06.05	Scotland-Moldova	
08.06.05	Belarus-Scotland	
03.09.05	Moldova-Belarus	
03.09.05	Scotland-Italy	
03.09.05	Slovenia-Norway	
07.09.05	Belarus-Italy	
07.09.05	Moldova-Slovenia	
07.09.05	Norway-Scotland	
08.10.05	Italy-Slovenia	
08.10.05	Norway-Moldova	
08.10.05	Scotland-Belarus	
12.10.05	Belarus-Norway	
12.10.05	Italy-Moldova	
12.10.05	Slovenia-Scotland	

Group 6

Mar 26 - Manchester
England 4 (J Cole 47, Owen 52, Baird og 54, Lampard 62)
Northern Ireland 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 65,239. **Ref:** Stark (Ger)
England: Robinson - G Neville, Ferdinand, Terry, A Cole, Beckham (Dyer 72), Lampard, Gerrard (Hargreaves 72), J Cole, Rooney (Defoe 80), Owen.
Northern Ireland: Taylor - Baird, A Hughes, Murdock, Capaldi, Gillespie, Whitley (Jones 88), Johnson, Doherty (Davis 59), Elliott, Healy (Kirk 88).

Mar 26 - Warsaw
Poland 8 (Frankowski 12, 63, 67, Hajiyev og 16, Kosowski 41, Krzynowek 72, Saganowski 84, 90)
Azerbaijan 0
HT: 3-0. **Att:** 8,112. **Ref:** Vollquartz (Den)
Poland: Dudek - Baszczynski, Klos, J Bak, Rzasa, Kosowski (Smolarek 46), Sobolewski, Szymkowiak, Krzynowek, Frankowski (Niedzielan 67), Zurawski (Saganowski 74).
Azerbaijan: Kramarenko - Hajiyev, Sadigov, Amirbekov, K Guliev, Shukurov, Kerimov (Akhtyamov 46), Emin Guliev (Malikov 20), Nadirov, Nabiyev (I Gurbanov 46), G Gurbanov.

Mar 26 - Cardiff
Wales 0
Austria 2 (Vastic 82, Stranzl 86)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 47,760. **Ref:** Allaerts (Blg)
Wales: Coyne - Delaney, Gabbidon, Page, Ricketts, Fletcher, Robinson, Bellamy, Davies (Earnshaw 75), Giggs, Hartson.
Austria: Payer - Dospel, Ehmann, Pogatetz, Katzer, Kirchler, Aufhauser, Stranzl, Ivanschitz (Hieblinger 89), Mayrleb (Mair 87), Haas (Vastic 78).

Mar 30 - Vienna
Austria 1 (Aufhauser 87)
Wales 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 29,500. **Ref:** Mejuto Gonzalez (Spa)
Austria: Payer - Dospel (Kiesenebner 84), Ehmann, Stranzl, Katzer, Kirchler (Mair 78), Aufhauser, Kuhbauer, Ivanschitz, Mayrleb, Haas (Vastic 55).
Wales: Coyne - J Collins (Page 58), Gabbidon, Partridge, Delaney, Davies, Fletcher, Robinson, Ricketts, Bellamy, Giggs.

Mar 30 - Newcastle
England 2 (Gerrard 51, Beckham 62)
Azerbaijan 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 49,046. **Ref:** Gomes Costa (Por)
England: Robinson - G Neville, Ferdinand (King 74), Terry, A Cole, Beckham (Defoe 84), Lampard, Gerrard, J Cole, Rooney (Dyer 74), Owen.
Azerbaijan: Kramarenko - Amirbekov (V Guliev 46), Sadigov, Hajiyev, Hashimov, Kerimov, Malikov, Bakhshiyev, Abdurakhmanov, Nabiyev (Ponomarev 74), G Gurbanov (Akhtyamov 74).

Mar 30 - Warsaw
Poland 1 (Zurawski 86)
Northern Ireland 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 13,515. **Ref:** Frojdfeldt (Swe)
Poland: Dudek - Baszczynski, Klos, J Bak, Rzasa (Kielbowicz 45), Karwan (Rasiak 74), Kaluzny (Mila 67), Szymkowiak, Krzynowek, Zurawski, Frankowski.
Northern Ireland: Taylor - Baird, Williams (Elliott 88), A Hughes, Murdock, Capaldi, Gillespie, Whitley, Davis, Healy (Smith 81), Quinn (Feeney 35).

GROUP 6

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
England	6	5	1	0	13	3	16
Poland	6	5	0	1	19	5	15
Austria	6	3	2	1	11	8	11
N Ireland	6	0	3	3	5	13	3
Wales	6	0	2	4	5	11	2
Azerbaijan	6	0	2	4	1	14	2

04.09.04	Austria-England	2-2
04.09.04	Azerbaijan-Wales	1-1
04.09.04	Northern Ireland-Poland	0-3
08.09.04	Austria-Azerbaijan	2-0
08.09.04	Poland-England	1-2
08.09.04	Wales-Northern Ireland	2-2
09.10.04	Austria-Poland	1-3
09.10.04	Azerbaijan-Northern Ireland	0-0
09.10.04	England-Wales	2-0
13.10.04	Azerbaijan-England	0-1
13.10.04	Northern Ireland-Austria	3-3
13.10.04	Wales-Poland	2-3
26.03.05	England-Northern Ireland	4-0
26.03.05	Poland-Azerbaijan	8-0
26.03.05	Wales-Austria	0-2
30.03.05	Austria-Wales	1-0
30.03.05	England-Azerbaijan	2-0
30.03.05	Poland-Northern Ireland	1-0
04.06.05	Azerbaijan-Poland	
03.09.05	Northern Ireland-Azerbaijan	
03.09.05	Poland-Austria	
03.09.05	Wales-England	
07.09.05	Azerbaijan-Austria	
07.09.05	Northern Ireland-England	
07.09.05	Poland-Wales	
08.10.05	England-Austria	
08.10.05	Northern Ireland-Wales	
12.10.05	Austria-Northern Ireland	
12.10.05	England-Poland	
12.10.05	Wales-Azerbaijan	

Group 7

Mar 26 - Brussels
Belgium 4 (E Mpenza 15, 54, Daerden 44, Buffel 76)
Bosnia-Herzegovina 1 (Bajramovic 1)
HT: 2-1. **Att:** 36,700. **Ref:** Hrinak (Slk)
Belgium: Proto - Doll, Kompany, Simons, Van Buyten, Van der Heyden, Daerden, Vanderhaeghe, Buffel (Bisconti 89), E Mpenza (Clement 89), Pieroni (Vandenbergh 87).
Bosnia-Herzegovina: Hasagic - Milenkovic, Bajic, Papac (Misimovic 58), Bajramovic, Barbarez, Beslija, Spahic, Baljic (Halilovic 58), Bolic, Grlic (Grujic 73).

Mar 30 - Sarajevo
Bosnia-Herzegovina 1 (Bolic 21)
Lithuania 1 (Stankevicius 61)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 6,000. **Ref:** Baskakov (Rus)
Bosnia-Herzegovina: Hasagic - Bajic (Halilovic 72), Vidic, Spahic, Bajramovic, Milenkovic, Bolic, Grlic, Barbarez, Misimovic (Grujic 67), Baljic (Beslija 46).
Lithuania: Karcemarskas - Stankevicius, Dziaukstas, Skerla, Skarbalius, Semberas, E Cesnauskis (Barasa 61), D Cesnauskis (Mikoliunas 89), Danilevicius (Vencevicius 90), Jankauskas, Poskus. *Sent off: Stankevicius 65min.*

Mar 30 - Serravalle
San Marino 1 (A Selva 40)
Belgium 2 (Simons pen 17, Van Buyten 65)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 871. **Ref:** Kasnaferis (Gre)
San Marino: F Gasperoni - Albani, S Bacchiochi, Ciacci (B Gasperoni 60), Della Valle, C Valentini, Domeniconi (P Montagna 88), A Gasperoni, Vannucci, Michele Marani, A Selva.
Belgium: Proto - Doll (Vandenbergh 57), Kompany, Simons, Van Buyten, Van der Heyden, Daerden, Vanderhaeghe, Buffel (Chatelle 37), E Mpenza, Pieroni (Bisconti 82).

Mar 30 - Belgrade
Serbia & Montenegro 0
Spain 0
Att: 48,910. **Ref:** Busacca (Swi)
Serbia & Montenegro: Jevric - Gavrancic, Vidic, Krstajic, Dragutinovic, Koroman (Basta 77), Duljaj, D Stankovic, P Djordjevic, Kezman (Jestrovic 80), Milosevic (Ilic 65).
Spain: Casillas - Sergio Ramos, Pablo, Puyol (Juanito 46), Del Horno, Joaquin, Albelda, De la Pena (Raul 46), Xavi, Reyes (Antonio Lopez 62), Fernando Torres.

GROUP 7

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Serbia & M'gro	5	3	2	0	10	0	11
Spain	5	2	3	0	8	1	9
Lithuania	5	2	3	0	7	2	9
Belgium	5	2	1	2	7	7	7
Bosnia-Herz	4	0	3	1	3	6	3
San Marino	6	0	0	6	1	20	0

04.09.04	Belgium-Lithuania	1-1
04.09.04	San Marino-Serbia & M'negro	0-3
08.09.04	Bosnia-Herz-Spain	1-1
08.09.04	Lithuania-San Marino	4-0
09.10.04	Bosnia-Herz-Serbia & M'negro	0-0
09.10.04	Spain-Belgium	2-0
13.10.04	Lithuania-Spain	0-0
13.10.04	Serbia & M'negro-San Marino	5-0
17.11.04	Belgium-Serbia & M'negro	0-2
17.11.04	San Marino-Lithuania	0-1
09.02.05	Spain-San Marino	5-0
26.03.05	Belgium-Bosnia-Herz	4-1
30.03.05	Bosnia-Herz-Lithuania	1-1
30.03.05	San Marino-Belgium	1-2
30.03.05	Serbia & M'negro-Spain	0-0
04.06.05	San Marino-Bosnia-Herz	
04.06.05	Serbia & M'negro-Belgium	
04.06.05	Spain-Lithuania	
08.06.05	Spain-Bosnia-Herz	
03.09.05	Bosnia-Herz-Belgium	
03.09.05	Serbia & M'negro-Lithuania	
07.09.05	Belgium-San Marino	
07.09.05	Lithuania-Bosnia-Herz	
07.09.05	Spain-Serbia & M'negro	
08.10.05	Belgium-Spain	
08.10.05	Bosnia-Herz-San Marino	
08.10.05	Lithuania-Serbia & M'negro	
12.10.05	Lithuania-Belgium	
12.10.05	San Marino-Spain	
12.10.05	Serbia & M'negro-Bosnia-Herz	

Group 8

Mar 26 - Sofia
Bulgaria 0
Sweden 3 (Ljungberg 17, pen 90, Edman 73)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 42,563. **Ref:** Fandel (Ger)
Bulgaria: Ivankov - Kishishev (Kirilov 66), I Petkov, Markov, Yankov, Lazarov (Topuzakov 63), Georgiev, Borimirov (Yanev 77), Georgi Ivanov, Ilian Stoyanov, Berbatov. *Sent off: Markov 59min.*
Sweden: Isaksson - Ostlund, Mellberg, Lucic, Edman, Linderoth, Alexandersson (Wilhelmsson 60), A Svensson, Ljungberg, Ibrahimovic, M Jonson (Allback 80).

Mar 26 - Zagreb
Croatia 4 (N Kovac 39, 75, Simunic 71, Prso 90)
Iceland 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 17,912. **Ref:** Damon (SAf)
Croatia: Butina - Srna, Simunic, Tomas, Tudor, I Leko (J Leko 78), Seric (Bosnjak 85), Kranjcar, N Kovac, Prso, Klasnic (Olic 67).
Iceland: Arason - K O Sigurdsson, I Sigurdsson, O O Bjarnason, Marteinsson (Gislason 73), Vidarsson (Steinsson 47), Hreidarsson, B Gunnarsson, H Helguson, J K Gudjonsson (B Gudjonsson 60), Einarsson.

Mar 30 - Zagreb
Croatia 3 (Prso 24, 36, Tudor 80)
Malta 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 15,510. **Ref:** Kapitanis (Cyp)
Croatia: Butina - Tomas, R Kovac (Olic 46), Tudor, I Leko, Babic, Prso, N Kovac (Vranjes 77), Kranjcar, Bosnjak (Tokic 68), Klasnic.
Malta: Haber - Pullicino, Azzopardi, Sammut, Said (Mallia 59), Dimech, Agius, Giglio, Michael Mifsud (Barbara 68), Grima (Woods 46), Mattocks.

Mar 30 - Budapest
Hungary 1 (Rajczi 90)
Bulgaria 1 (Stilian Petrov 52)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 11,586. **Ref:** Wegereef (Hol)
Hungary: Kiraly - Komlosi, Stark, Juhasz, Bodnar, Boor, G Korsos (Kerekes 74), Vincze (Rajczi 84), Huszti, Szabics, Torghelle.
Bulgaria: Ivankov - Kirilov, Ilian Stoyanov, Topuzakov, I Petkov, Lazarov (Borimirov 75), Yankov (Manchev 64), Stilian Petrov, Georgiev, Berbatov, M Petrov (Georgi Ivanov 83).

GROUP 8

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Croatia	5	4	1	0	13	2	13
Sweden	5	4	0	1	17	2	12
Bulgaria	5	2	2	1	10	8	8
Hungary	5	2	1	2	6	9	7
Iceland	5	0	1	4	4	14	1
Malta	5	0	1	4	1	16	1

04.09.04	Croatia-Hungary	3-0
04.09.04	Iceland-Bulgaria	1-3
04.09.04	Malta-Sweden	0-7
08.09.04	Hungary-Iceland	3-2
08.09.04	Sweden-Croatia	0-1
09.10.04	Croatia-Bulgaria	2-2
09.10.04	Malta-Iceland	0-0
09.10.04	Sweden-Hungary	3-0
13.10.04	Bulgaria-Malta	4-1
13.10.04	Iceland-Sweden	1-4
17.11.04	Malta-Hungary	0-2
26.03.05	Bulgaria-Sweden	0-3
26.03.05	Croatia-Iceland	4-0
30.03.05	Croatia-Malta	3-0
30.03.05	Hungary-Bulgaria	1-1
04.06.05	Bulgaria-Croatia	
04.06.05	Iceland-Hungary	
04.06.05	Sweden-Malta	
08.06.05	Iceland-Malta	
03.09.05	Hungary-Malta	
03.09.05	Iceland-Croatia	
03.09.05	Sweden-Bulgaria	
07.09.05	Bulgaria-Iceland	
07.09.05	Hungary-Sweden	
07.09.05	Malta-Croatia	
08.10.05	Bulgaria-Hungary	
08.10.05	Croatia-Sweden	
12.10.05	Hungary-Croatia	
12.10.05	Malta-Bulgaria	
12.10.05	Sweden-Iceland	

Group winners and the two best runners-up qualify for finals. The other six runners-up are paired in three two-leg play-off matches, the winners of which also qualify for finals*
**Group runners-up will be ranked according to their results against the teams finishing 1st, 3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th in their respective groups*

European play-off matchdays:
Nov 12 (1st leg), Nov 16 (2nd leg), 2005

OCEANIA

0.5 finals berths

3rd stage

03.09.05	Solomon Islands-Australia
06.09.05	Australia-Solomon Islands

Winners meet the fifth-placed South American team over two legs for a place in finals

SOUTH AMERICA

4.5 finals berths

Mar 26 - La Paz
Bolivia 1 (J A Castillo 49)
Argentina 2 (Figueroa 57, Galletti 63)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 22,000. **Ref:** Larrionda (Uru)
Bolivia: L Fernandez - Colque (Pachi 46), O Sanchez, Raldes, Alvarez, Angulo (Cabrera 69), Pizarro, Galindo (R Garcia 85), E Sanchez, J A Castillo, Botero.
Argentina: Abbondanzieri - Cufre, Burdisso, G Milito, C Rodriguez, Cambiasso, Duscher, M Rodriguez (Ponzio 65), Scaloni, Figueroa (Zarate 75), Galletti (Palacio 83).

Mar 26 - Santiago
Chile 1 (Mirosevic 46)
Uruguay 1 (Regueiro 6)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 55,000. **Ref:** Ruiz (Col)
Chile: N Tapia - Fuentes, R Rojas, Contreras (Valdivia 46), Maldonado, Pizarro, Mirosevic (Valenzuela 78), Alvarez, M Gonzalez (S Gonzalez 78), Pinilla, Salas.
Uruguay: Viera - Lopez, Lugano, Montero, Dario Rodriguez, Diogo, Garcia, R Olivera (Sosa 60), Regueiro (Sanchez 85), Forlan, Zalayeta (R Morales 69).

Mar 26 - Maracaibo
Venezuela 0
Colombia 0
Att: 35,000. **Ref:** Simon (Bra)
Venezuela: Dudamel - H Gonzalez, Rey, Cichero, Hernandez, Maldonado, Vielma, Jimenez, Urdaneta (A Gonzalez 66), Castellin (C Gonzalez 52), Margiotta (Noriega 75).
Colombia: Calero - Orozco, I Cordoba, Yepes, Bedoya, J Restrepo, J C Ramirez (Vargas 72), Hernandez (Pacheco 74), J Castilio (Herrera 87), Perea, Ferreira.

Mar 27 - Goiania
Brazil 1 (Kaka 73)
Peru 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 49,163. **Ref:** Amarilla (Par)
Brazil: Dida - Cafu, Lucio, Juan, Roberto Carlos, Emerson, Ze Roberto, Juninho Pernambucano (Robinho 46), Ronaldinho, Kaka (Renato 83), Ronaldo.
Peru: Ibanez - Jorge Soto, Rebosio, Rodriguez (Guadalupe 73), Vilches, Jayo, C Zegarra, Solano (Cominges 68), Palacios (Olcese 46), Farfan, Pizarro.

Mar 27 - Quito
Ecuador 5 (Valencia 32, 49, Mendez 45, 47, M Ayovi pen 77)
Paraguay 2 (Cardozo pen 9, Cabanas 14)
HT: 2-2. **Att:** 32,449. **Ref:** Mendez (Uru)
Ecuador: Villafuerte - De la Cruz, I Hurtado, G Espinoza, Ambrossi, E Tenorio (Caicedo 78), M Ayovi, Mendez, Valencia, O Tenorio (Salas 56), Delgado (Kaviedes 78).
Paraguay: Villar - Sarabia, Gamarra, Da Silva, Caniza, Gavilan (E Barreto 52), Bonet, A Ortiz, Monges (Cuevas 52), Cardozo, Cabanas.

Mar 29 - La Paz
Bolivia 3 (Cichero og 1, J A Castillo 25, Vaca 83)
Venezuela 1 (Maldonado 71)
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 7,908. **Ref:** Lecca (Per)
Bolivia: L Fernandez - Jauregui, Alvarez, Raldes, O Sanchez, Pizarro, R Garcia (Vaca 19), Galindo, E Sanchez (Pachi 80), Botero, J A Castillo (Cabrera 58).
Venezuela: Dudamel - De Ornelas (Rondon 71), Rey, Cichero (Noriega 46), Fuenmayor, Hernandez, H Gonzalez, A Gonzalez, L Vera, Urdaneta (C Gonzalez 57), Maldonado.

Mar 30 - Buenos Aires
Argentina 1 (Crespo 65)
Colombia 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 55,000. **Ref:** Amarilla (Par)
Argentina: Abbondanzieri - Zanetti, Ayala, Heinze, Sorin, L Gonzalez, Mascherano (Galletti 55), Cambiasso, Riquelme, Saviola (Placente 79), Crespo.
Colombia: Calero - Orozco, I Cordoba, Yepes, Bedoya, Viafara, J Restrepo, Vargas, Oviedo, Hernandez (Viveros 46), Perea (J Castillo 68). *Sent off: Vargas 41min.*

Mar 30 - Asuncion
Paraguay 2 (Morinigo 37, Cardozo 61)
Chile 1 (Fuentes 73)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 20,000. **Ref:** Elizondo (Arg)
Paraguay: Villar - Bonet, J C Caceres, Gamarra, Da Silva, Nunez, Paredes (Gavilan 82), A Ortiz, Morinigo (E Barreto 60), Cabanas, Cardozo (Haedo Valdez 71).
Chile: N Tapia - R Rojas, Fuentes, Olarra, Perez (Alvarez 46), Melendez (Pizarro 53), Maldonado, Mirosevic (S Gonzalez 64), M Gonzalez, Salas, Pinilla.

Mar 30 - Lima
Peru 2 (Guerrero 1, Farfan 58)
Ecuador 2 (De la Cruz 3, Valencia 45)
HT: 1-2. **Att:** 45,000. **Ref:** Chandia (Chl)
Peru: Ibanez - Jorge Soto (Salas 60), Rebosio, Acasiete, Vargas, Jayo, Solano (Mendoza 84), C Zegarra (Palacios 60), Farfan, Pizarro, Guerrero.
Ecuador: Villafuerte - De la Cruz, G Espinoza, I Hurtado, Ambrossi, M Ayovi (Caicedo 71), E Tenorio, Valencia, Mendez (W Ayovi 85), Baldeon (Salas 46), Delgado.

Mar 30 - Montevideo
Uruguay 1 (Forlan 48)
Brazil 1 (Emerson 67)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 70,000. **Ref:** Baldassi (Arg)
Uruguay: Viera - Lopez, Lugano, Montero, Dario Rodriguez, Diogo (De los Santos 86), R Olivera (Chevanton 72), Garcia, Regueiro (Delgado 57), Forlan, Zalayeta.
Brazil: Dida - Cafu, Lucio, Luisao, Roberto Carlos, Emerson, Ze Roberto (Renato 68), Ronaldinho, Kaka, Ricardo Oliveira (Robinho 64), Ronaldo.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Argentina	13	8	4	1	24	12	28
Brazil	13	6	6	1	21	12	24
Ecuador	13	6	2	5	19	15	20
Paraguay	13	5	4	4	16	17	19
Uruguay	13	4	4	5	18	25	16
Chile	13	3	5	5	12	14	14
Colombia	13	3	5	5	12	12	14
Venezuela	13	4	2	7	14	20	14
Peru	13	3	5	5	15	16	14
Bolivia	13	4	1	8	15	23	13

06.09.03	Argentina-Chile	2-2
06.09.03	Ecuador-Venezuela	2-0
06.09.03	Peru-Paraguay	4-1
07.09.03	Colombia-Brazil	1-2
07.09.03	Uruguay-Bolivia	5-0
09.09.03	Chile-Peru	2-1
09.09.03	Venezuela-Argentina	0-3
10.09.03	Bolivia-Colombia	4-0
10.09.03	Brazil-Ecuador	1-0
10.09.03	Paraguay-Uruguay	4-1
15.11.03	Argentina-Bolivia	3-0
15.11.03	Colombia-Venezuela	0-1
15.11.03	Paraguay-Ecuador	2-1
15.11.03	Uruguay-Chile	2-1
16.11.03	Peru-Brazil	1-1
18.11.03	Chile-Paraguay	0-1
18.11.03	Venezuela-Bolivia	2-1
19.11.03	Brazil-Uruguay	3-3
19.11.03	Colombia-Argentina	1-1
19.11.03	Ecuador-Peru	0-0
30.03.04	Argentina-Ecuador	1-0
30.03.04	Bolivia-Chile	0-2
31.03.04	Paraguay-Brazil	0-0
31.03.04	Peru-Colombia	0-2
31.03.04	Uruguay-Venezuela	0-3
01.06.04	Bolivia-Paraguay	2-1
01.06.04	Uruguay-Peru	1-3
01.06.04	Venezuela-Chile	0-1
02.06.04	Brazil-Argentina	3-1
02.06.04	Ecuador-Colombia	2-1
05.06.04	Ecuador-Bolivia	3-2
06.06.04	Argentina-Paraguay	0-0
06.06.04	Chile-Brazil	1-1
06.06.04	Colombia-Uruguay	5-0
06.06.04	Peru-Venezuela	0-0
04.09.04	Peru-Argentina	1-3
05.09.04	Brazil-Bolivia	3-1
05.09.04	Chile-Colombia	0-0
05.09.04	Paraguay-Venezuela	1-0
05.09.04	Uruguay-Ecuador	1-0
09.10.04	Argentina-Uruguay	4-2
09.10.04	Bolivia-Peru	1-0
09.10.04	Colombia-Paraguay	1-1
09.10.04	Venezuela-Brazil	2-5
10.10.04	Ecuador-Chile	2-0
12.10.04	Bolivia-Uruguay	0-0
13.10.04	Brazil-Colombia	0-0
13.10.04	Chile-Argentina	0-0
13.10.04	Paraguay-Peru	1-1
14.10.04	Venezuela-Ecuador	3-1
17.11.04	Argentina-Venezuela	3-2
17.11.04	Colombia-Bolivia	1-0
17.11.04	Ecuador-Brazil	1-0
17.11.04	Peru-Chile	2-1
17.11.04	Uruguay-Paraguay	1-0
26.03.05	Bolivia-Argentina	1-2
26.03.05	Chile-Uruguay	1-1
26.03.05	Venezuela-Colombia	0-0
27.03.05	Brazil-Peru	1-0
27.03.05	Ecuador-Paraguay	5-2
29.03.05	Bolivia-Venezuela	3-1
30.03.05	Argentina-Colombia	1-0
30.03.05	Paraguay-Chile	2-1
30.03.05	Peru-Ecuador	2-2
30.03.05	Uruguay-Brazil	1-1
04/05.06.05	Brazil-Paraguay	
04/05.06.05	Chile-Bolivia	
04/05.06.05	Colombia-Peru	
04/05.06.05	Ecuador-Argentina	
04/05.06.05	Venezuela-Uruguay	
07/08.06.05	Argentina-Brazil	
07/08.06.05	Chile-Venezuela	
07/08.06.05	Colombia-Ecuador	
07/08.06.05	Paraguay-Bolivia	
07/08.06.05	Peru-Uruguay	
03/04.09.05	Bolivia-Ecuador	
03/04.09.05	Brazil-Chile	
03/04.09.05	Paraguay-Argentina	
03/04.09.05	Uruguay-Colombia	
03/04.09.05	Venezuela-Peru	
08/09.10.05	Argentina-Peru	
08/09.10.05	Bolivia-Brazil	
08/09.10.05	Colombia-Chile	
08/09.10.05	Ecuador-Uruguay	
08/09.10.05	Venezuela-Paraguay	
11/12.10.05	Brazil-Venezuela	
11/12.10.05	Chile-Ecuador	
11/12.10.05	Paraguay-Colombia	
11/12.10.05	Peru-Bolivia	
11/12.10.05	Uruguay-Argentina	

Top four qualify for finals; fifth-placed team meet the Oceania section winners over two legs for a place in finals

INTERNATIONALS

Saturday, March 12

Mar 12 - Nairobi - friendly
Kenya 1 (Mkenya 25)
Rwanda 1 (Bolla 10)
HT: 1-1

Mar 12 - Kuwait City - friendly
Kuwait 0
Finland 1 (N Kuqi 16)
HT: 0-1
Finland: Kaven - Nyman (Timoska 82), Kuivasto, Sauso, Sarajarvi (Kononen 21), Nurmela, Ilola (Nordback 89), Wiss, Scheweleff (Tarvajarvi 69), Hyyrynen (Huusko 61), N Kuqi (Heinikangas 84).

Mar 12 - Khartoum - friendly
Sudan 3
Ethiopia 1

Monday, March 14

Mar 14 - Dammam - friendly
Saudi Arabia 0
Egypt 1 (Moteab 64)
HT: 0-0
Egypt: Abdelwahed El-Sayed (N El-Sayed) - Fathi, El-Nahhas, Gomaa, Aboumesallem, Sabry (Ragab), Shawki, Aboutraika (Fathallah), Abdel Malek (Moustafa), Ali (Moteab), Zaki (Abougreisha).

Wednesday, March 16

Mar 16 - Harare - friendly
Zimbabwe 1 (Chimedza 53)
Botswana 1 (Moathiaping 72)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 3,000

Friday, March 18

Mar 18 - Al Ain, UAE - friendly
Kuwait 3 (Abdulreda 70, Al-Mutawa 79, Al-Subaih 90)
Armenia 1 (Mkhitaryan pen 87)
HT: 0-0

Mar 18 - Dammam - friendly
Saudi Arabia 1 (Al-Basha 48)
Finland 4 (Kuivasto 4, N Kuqi 71, 78, Nurmela 76)
HT: 0-1
Finland: Sillanpaa - Nyman (Hyyrynen 88), Kuivasto, Timoska (Sauso 74), Kononen, Nordback (Wiss 53), Ilola, Heinikangas, Nurmela, Tarvajarvi (Scheweleff 46), Huusko (N Kuqi 46).

Saturday, March 19

Mar 19 - Maseru - friendly
Lesotho 1
Namibia 2 (Guriras, Malgas)

Mar 19 - Albuquerque - friendly
United States 1 (Johnson 45)
Honduras 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 9,222. **Ref:** Navarro (Can)
United States: Cannon (Hartman 46) - Marshall, Borchers, Albright, Mastroeni (Zavagnin 85), Dempsey, Ralston, Mathis (Martino 63), Noonan (Convey 63), Johnson, Ching.
Honduras: J Morales - Vallecillo, Mendoza, Figueroa, Reyes (Sabillon 46), Lopez (Gonzalez 74), Marin, Moran (Gomez 56), Guerrero, Costa (Velasquez 69), Nunez.

Sunday, March 20

Mar 20 - Dubai, UAE - friendly
South Korea 1 (Kim Sang-sik 55)
Burkina Faso 0
HT: 0-0

Wednesday, March 23

Mar 23 - Nairobi - friendly
Kenya 2 (Baraza 44, Sunguti 87)
Ghana 2 (Gyan 23, Amoah 89)
HT: 1-1

Saturday, March 26

Mar 26 - Sydney - friendly
Australia 2 (Bresciano 23, Elrich 73)
Iraq 1 (Nasir 12)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 30,258. **Ref:** O'Leary (NZ)
Australia: Schwarzer - Moore, Neill, Popovic, Emerton (Culina 71), Skoko, Cahill (Elrich 71), Bresciano (Sterjovski 63), Chipperfield (McKain 63), Lazaridis (T Vidmar 46), Aloisi.

Mar 26 - Nicosia - friendly
Cyprus 2 (Charalambidis 9, Okkas 28)
Jordan 1 (Ahmet 85)
HT: 2-0
Cyprus: Giorgallides (N Panayiotou 20) - Lambrou, Louka, Elia, Makrides, Krassas (Aloneftis 59), Satsias (Okkarides 59), Garpozis (C Michael 59), Okkas (Yiasoumi 64), Charalambidis (Filaniotis 81), M Constantinou (Goumenos 59).

Mar 26 - Barcelos - friendly
Portugal 4 (Manuel Fernandes 2, Pauleta 11, Helder Postiga 81, Nuno Gomes 90)
Canada 1 (McKenna 84)
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 13,000. **Ref:** Ishchenko (Ukr)
Portugal: Quim - Paulo Ferreira, Fernando Meira (Boa Morte 70), Jorge Andrade, Nuno Valente (Miguel 46), Manuel Fernandes, Maniche (Ricardo Costa 46), Cristiano Ronaldo (Hugo Viana 46), Deco, Simao (Helder Postiga 46), Pauleta (Nuno Gomes 46).
Canada: Hirschfeld - Hutchinson (Peters 77), McKenna, Reda, Klukowski, Imhof (Pozniak 86), Stalteri, De Guzman, Brennan (Radzinski 46), De Rosario, Occean (Bernier 67).

Mar 26 - Celje - friendly
Slovenia 0
Germany 1 (Podolski 27)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 9,000. **Ref:** Poll (Eng)
Slovenia: Handanovic - Ilic, M Mavric, Knavs, Filekovic, Cipot, Seslar (Pokorn 66), Komac (Sukalo 77), Koren (Rodic 46), N Ceh, Siljak (Cimirotic 46).
Germany: Kahn - Hinkel (Owomoyela 73), Friedrich, Huth, Hitzlsperger, Frings, Baumann (Schweinsteiger 59), Neuville (Borowski 84), Ballack, Podolski, Klose (Kuranyi 75).

Mar 26 - Salamanca - friendly
Spain 3 (Fernando Torres pen 3, Xavi 32, Joaquin 51)
China 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 17,000. **Ref:** Cortez Batista (Por)
Spain: Casillas - Puyol (Sergio Ramos 46), Pablo, Juanito, Del Horno, Albelda (Orbaiz 46), De la Pena, Joaquin (Luis Garcia 54), Xavi (Valeron 46), Luque (Reyes 46), Fernando Torres (Mista 46).
China: Li Yunfei - Wei Xin, Du Wei (Zhang Yaokun 54), Li Weifeng, Zhang Yonghai (Sun Xiang 54), Ji Mingyi, Shao Jiayi (Shi Jun 90), Xu Yunlong (Zou Yougen 27; Hu Zhaojun 65), Zhao Junzhe, Chen Yongqiang, Li Yi (Zheng Bin 83).

Tuesday, March 29

Mar 29 - Perth - friendly
Australia 3 (Milicic 25, 57, Zdrilic 85)
Indonesia 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 13,719. **Ref:** Yamanishi (Jap)
Australia: Kalac - T Vidmar, Moore (Popovic 46), Milicevic, Lazaridis (Colosimo 61), McKain, Culina (Zdrilic 77), Wilkshire (Neill 61), Sterjovski, Emerton (Elrich 46), Milicic (North 77).

Mar 29 - Dublin - friendly
Rep Ireland 1 (Morrison 82)
China 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 35,222. **Ref:** Casha (Mlt)
Rep Ireland: Kenny - Maybury, Cunningham (O'Brien 46), Dunne, O'Shea, Kavanagh, A Reid, Kilbane (Roy Keane 66), Duff (Miller 46), Robbie Keane (Morrison 62), Elliott (Doherty 74).
China: Li Leilei - Wei Xin (Wang Liang 46), Zhang Yonghai (Zhang Yaokun 75), Li Weifeng, Ji Mingyi, Sun Xiang, Chen Yongqiang (Li Yan 38), Zhao Junzhe, Hu Zhaojun (Zheng Bin 86), Shao Jiayi (Du Wei 64), Li Yi (Shi Jun 46).

Wednesday, March 30
Mar 30 - Padua - friendly
Italy 0
Iceland 0
Att: 16,697. **Ref:** Hamer (Lux)
Italy: Roma (De Sanctis 46) - Zaccardo, Barzagli, Materazzi (Cassetti 46), Grosso, De Rossi, Blasi (Diana 61), Barone (Pinzi 74), Esposito, Toni (Iaquinta 46), Langella (Di Michele 46).
Iceland: Arason - K O Sigurdsson, O Bjarnason, Hreidarsson, I Sigurdsson, Marteinsson (Gislason 71), B Gunnarsson, B Gudjonsson (Arnason 78), Einarsson (Thorvaldsson 90), Steinsson (Hallfredsson 90), H Sigurdsson (Skulason 87).
Sent off: Arnason 81min.

EAST ASIAN CHAMPIONSHIP

Preliminary tournament

In Taipei, Taiwan
Mar 5: Taiwan 9 Guam 0; Hong Kong 6 Mongolia 0.
Mar 7: Guam 0 Hong Kong 16; North Korea 6 Mongolia 0.
Mar 9: Taiwan 0 North Korea 2; Mongolia 4 Guam 0.
Mar 11: Taiwan 0 Hong Kong 5; Guam 0 North Korea 21.
Mar 13: Taiwan 0 Mongolia 0; Hong Kong 0 North Korea 2.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
North Korea	4	4	0	0	31	0	12
Hong Kong	4	3	0	1	27	2	9
Taiwan	4	1	1	2	9	7	4
Mongolia	4	1	1	2	4	12	4
Guam	4	0	0	4	0	50	0

North Korea qualify for finals, to be staged in South Korea between July 31 and August 6, along with South Korea, China and Japan

GOLD CUP

FINALS DRAW

In the United States

Group A
In Miami
July 6: Colombia v Panama; Trinidad & Tobago v Honduras.
July 9: Panama v Trinidad & Tobago; Honduras v Colombia.
July 11: Colombia v Trinidad & Tobago; Honduras v Panama.

Group B
In Seattle
July 7: Canada v Costa Rica; Cuba v United States.
July 9: Costa Rica v Cuba; United States v Canada.
In Foxboro
July 12: United States v Costa Rica; Canada v Cuba.

Group C
In Los Angeles
July 8: South Africa v Mexico; Guatemala v Jamaica.
July 10: Mexico v Guatemala; Jamaica v South Africa.
In Houston
July 13: Guatemala v South Africa; Mexico v Jamaica.

Quarter-finals
In Foxboro
July 16: Gp A 1st v Gp B 2nd (QF1); Gp B 1st v Gp A 3rd OR Gp C 3rd (QF2)
In Houston
July 17: Gp C 1st v Gp A 3rd OR Gp B 3rd (QF3); Gp C 2nd v Gp A 2nd (QF4)

Semi-finals
In New Jersey
July 21: QF1 winners v QF2 winners; QF3 winners v QF4 winners

Final
In New Jersey
July 24

WORLD YOUTH CUP

FINALS DRAW

In Holland

Group A
In Kerkrade
June 10: Benin v Australia; Holland v Japan.
June 15: Japan v Benin; Australia v Holland.
June 18: Japan v Australia; Holland v Benin (in Tilburg).

Group B
In Utrecht
June 11: Turkey v China; Ukraine v Panama.
June 14: China v Ukraine; Panama v Turkey.
June 17: Turkey v Ukraine (in Doetinchem); China v Panama.

Group C
In Doetinchem
June 11: Spain v Morocco; Honduras v Chile.
June 14: Morocco v Honduras; Chile v Spain.
June 17: Spain v Honduras; Morocco v Chile (in Utrecht).

Group D
In Enschede
June 11: Argentina v United States; Germany v Egypt.
June 14: Egypt v Argentina; United States v Germany.
June 18: Argentina v Germany (in Emmen); United States v Egypt.

Group E
In Tilburg
June 12: Colombia v Italy; Syria v Canada.
June 15: Canada v Colombia; Italy v Syria.
June 18: Italy v Canada (in Kerkrade); Colombia v Syria.

Group F
In Emmen
June 12: Brazil v Nigeria; South Korea v Switzerland.
June 15: Switzerland v Brazil; Nigeria v South Korea.
June 18: Brazil v South Korea; Nigeria v Switzerland (in Enschede).

Second round
In Enschede
June 21: Gp D 1st v 3rd in Gp B, E OR F (game 37); Gp C 2nd v Gp A 2nd (game 38).
In Tilburg
June 21: Gp F 1st v Gp E 2nd (game 39); Gp B 1st v 3rd in Gp A, C OR D (game 40).
In Doetinchem
June 22: Gp F 2nd v Gp B 2nd (game 41); Gp A 1st v 3rd in Gp C, D OR E (game 42).
In Emmen
June 22: Gp E 1st v Gp D 2nd (game 43); Gp C 1st v 3rd in Gp A, B OR F (game 44).

Quarter-finals
In Utrecht
June 24: Game 38 winners v game 37 winners (QF1).
In Tilburg
June 24: Game 40 winners v game 39 winners (QF2).
In Kerkrade
June 25: Game 41 winners v game 42 winners (QF3).
In Enschede
June 25: Game 43 winners v game 44 winners (QF4).

Semi-finals
In Utrecht
June 28: QF2 winners v QF4 winners.
In Kerkrade
June 28: QF1 winners v QF3 winners.

Third-place play-off
In Utrecht
July 2

Final
In Utrecht
July 2

COSAFA CUP

Group A
Winners: South Africa

Group B
In Windhoek, Namibia
Apr 16: Semi-final - Mozambique v Zimbabwe.
Apr 16: Semi-final - Namibia v Botswana.
Apr 17: Final

Group C
In Lusaka, Zambia
June 11: Semi-final - Lesotho v Malawi.
June 11: Semi-final - Zambia v Swaziland.
June 12: Final.

Group winners qualify for the final group, to be held in August, along with holders Angola

EUROPE

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

1st knockout rnd, 2nd leg

March 15

Internazionale (Ita) 3 (Adriano 6, 65, 89)
FC Porto (Por) 1 (Jorge Costa 71)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 65,273. **Ref:** Hauge (Nor)
Inter 4-2 on agg
Inter: Toldo - J Zanetti, Materazzi, Mihajlovic, Cambiasso, Ze Maria, Stankovic (Kily Gonzalez 84), Veron (Van der Meyde 90), C Zanetti, Adriano, Cruz (Martins 77).
FC Porto: Vitor Baia - Seitaridis, Pedro Emanuel (Pepe 85), Jorge Costa, Ricardo Costa (Helder Postiga 69), Nuno Valente, Diego, Costinha, Maniche, McCarthy, Claudio Pitbull (Ricardo Quaresma 48).

Quarter-finals, 1st legs

April 5

Liverpool (Eng) 2 (Hyypia 10, Luis Garcia 25)
Juventus (Ita) 1 (Cannavaro 63)
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 41,216. **Ref:** De Bleeckere (Blg)
Liverpool: Carson - Finnan, Carragher, Hyypia, Traore, Luis Garcia, Gerrard, Biscan, Riise, Le Tallec (Smicer 73), Baros (Nunez 65).
Juventus: Buffon - Zebina (Montero 80), Thuram, Cannavaro, Zambrotta, Camoranesi, Blasi (Pessotto 46), Emerson, Nedved, Del Piero (Trezeguet 60), Ibrahimovic.

Lyon (Fra) 1 (Malouda 12)
PSV Eindhoven (Hol) 1 (Cocu 79)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 39,178. **Ref:** Collina (Ita)
Lyon: Coupet - Reveillere, Cris, Cacapa, Abidal, Essien, Diarra, Juninho, Govou, Wiltord, Malouda.
PSV: Gomes - Ooijer, Alex, Bouma, Lee, Van Bommel, Cocu, Vogel, Farfan (Beasley 71), Vennegoor of Hesselink, Park.

April 6

Chelsea (Eng) 4 (J Cole 5, Lampard 59, 70, Drogba 81)
Bayern Munich (Ger) 2 (Schweinsteiger 53, Ballack pen 90)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 40,253. **Ref:** Temmink (Hol)
Chelsea: Cech - Johnson (Huth 65), Ricardo Carvalho, Terry, Gallas, Makelele, Gudjohnsen, Lampard, J Cole (Tiago 81), Duff, Drogba (Forssell 89).
Bayern: Kahn - Sagnol, Lucio, Kovac, Lizarazu, Salihamidzic (Schweinsteiger 46), Hargreaves, Frings, Ze Roberto (Scholl 72), Ballack, Guerrero.

Milan (Ita) 2 (Stam 45, Shevchenko 74)
Internazionale (Ita) 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 78,958. **Ref:** Sars (Fra)
Milan: Dida - Cafu (Costacurta 90), Nesta (Kaladze 70), Stam, Maldini, Gattuso, Pirlo, Seedorf, Kaka, Crespo (Ambrosini 83), Shevchenko.
Inter: Toldo - J Zanetti, Cordoba, Mihajlovic, Favalli, Veron (Karagounis 70), C Zanetti (Van der Meyde 81), Cambiasso, Stankovic, Martins, Cruz (Vieri 55).

UEFA CUP

2nd knockout rnd, 1st leg

March 16

Steaua Bucharest (Rom) 0
Villarreal (Spa) 0
Ref: Busacca (Swi)

2nd knockout rnd, 2nd legs

March 16

AZ Alkmaar (Hol) 2 (Van Galen 9, Meerdink 65)
Shakhtar Donetsk (Ukr) 1 (Elano 66)
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Cortez Batista (Por)
AZ 5-2 on agg

Newcastle (Eng) 4 (Dyer 18, Shearer 45, 69, Bowyer 54)
Olympiakos (Gre) 0
HT: 2-0. **Ref:** Plautz (Aut)
Newcastle 7-1 on agg

March 17

Auxerre (Fra) 0
Lille (Fra) 0
Ref: Riley (Eng)
Sent off: Vitakic (Lille) 76min
Auxerre 1-0 on agg

CSKA Moscow (Rus) 2 (Daniel Carvalho 68, Vagner Love pen 84)
Partizan Belgrade (Ser) 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Paparesta (Ita)
Sent off: Djordjevic 83min, Tomic 84min (both Partizan)
CSKA 3-1 on agg

Parma (Ita) 1 (Cardone 19)
Sevilla (Spa) 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Larsen (Den)
Parma 1-0 on agg

Sporting Lisbon (Por) 1 (Pedro Barbosa 89)
Middlesbrough (Eng) 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Poulat (Fra)
Sporting 4-2 on agg

Zaragoza (Spa) 2 (Villa 59, Galletti 63)
Austria Wien (Aut) 2 (Papac 6, Dosunmu 12)
HT: 0-2. **Ref:** Hamer (Lux)
Sent off: Didulica (Austria Wien) 30min
Agg 3-3. Austria Wien on away goals

March 20

Villarreal (Spa) 2 (Jose Mari 6, Riquelme pen 62)
Steaua Bucharest (Rom) 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Stark (Ger)
Villarreal 2-0 on agg

Quarter-finals, 1st legs

April 7

Austria Wien 1 (Mila 61)
Parma 1 (Pisanu 34)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Poulat (Fra)

CSKA Moscow 4 (Odiah 21, Ignashevich pen 63, Vagner Love 71, Gusev 77)
Auxerre 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Medina Cantalejo (Spa)
Sent off: Mignot (Auxerre) 83min

Newcastle 1 (Shearer 37)
Sporting Lisbon 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Baskakov (Rus)

Villarreal 1 (Riquelme 13)
AZ Alkmaar 2 (Landzaat 11, Nelisse 74)
HT: 1-1. **Ref:** Plautz (Aut)

AUSTRIA

Mar 12: Grazer AK 2 Bregenz 0; Mattersburg 1 Wacker Tirol 1; Salzburg 0 Admira 1; Pasching 2 Sturm Graz 1.
Mar 13: Austria Wien 1 Rapid Wien 0.
Mar 19: Rapid Wien 1 Grazer AK 0; Bregenz 1 Salzburg 2; Sturm Graz 2 Mattersburg 3; Wacker Tirol 0 Pasching 0.
Mar 20: Admira 2 Austria Wien 2.

Apr 2: Austria Wien 1 Wacker Tirol 0; Sturm Graz 0 Admira 0; Salzburg 0 Grazer AK 1; Pasching 2 Bregenz 0.
Apr 3: Mattersburg 1 Rapid Wien 0.
Apr 6: Bregenz 0 Rapid Wien 2; Admira 0 Pasching 2.

AUSTRIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Pasching	26	17	3	6	46	30	54
Austria Wien	25	14	7	4	46	16	49
Rapid Wien	25	14	7	4	42	18	49
Grazer AK	26	13	5	8	35	23	44
Mattersburg	27	10	6	11	38	43	36
Wacker Tirol	27	8	9	10	38	38	33
Admira	26	8	5	13	29	43	29
Sturm Graz	27	7	6	14	24	38	27
Salzburg	26	6	6	14	28	38	24
Bregenz	27	4	6	17	24	63	18

BELGIUM

Friday, March 11
Mouscron 0
Standard 3 (Geraerts 23, Covalenco 51, Roussel 75) Att: 8,500

Saturday, March 12
FC Brussels 2 (Sels 31, Culek 32)
Mons 1 (Datti 7) Att: 8,000

Charleroi 0
St Truiden 0 Att: 8,079

Genk 2 (Engelaar 36, Vandenbergh 53)
Club Brugge 1 (Balaban 58) Att: 23,532

Lokeren 0
Germinal Beerschot 1 (Hoefkens 66) Att: 5,400

Ostende 1 (Landuyt 5)
Gent 2 (Vrancken 42, Jbari 78) Att: 3,200

Sunday, March 13
Cercle Brugge 1 (Roiha 51)
Anderlecht 3 (Dindane 3, Jestrovic 40, 49) Att: 7,300

La Louviere 1 (Djebbour 63)
Westerlo 2 (Keenan 6, Brosque 73) Att: 3,165

Lierse 1 (Imschoot 42)
Beveren 3 (Kaiper 1, Arunina 50, Romaric 76) Att: 7,500

Wednesday, March 16
Standard 1 (Geraerts 69)
La Louviere 0 Att: 15,000

Friday, March 18
Mons 1 (Nijock 61)
Genk 2 (Vandenbergh 79, Stojanovic 80) Att: 6,500

Saturday, March 19
Anderlecht 3 (Jestrovic 58, Tihinen 84, Zetterberg 88)
FC Brussels 0 Att: 22,500

Beveren 1 (Arunina 70)
Charleroi 2 (Christ 74, Defays 85) Att: 3,000

Club Brugge 0
Lokeren 0 Att: 25,926

Gent 1 (Jbari 67)
Lierse 0 Att: 7,100

Germinal Beerschot 1 (Cadu 75)
La Louviere 1 (Eloi 90) Att: 5,500

St Truiden 0
Cercle Brugge 1 (Dekelver 42) Att: 7,000

Westerlo 1 (C Janssens 89)
Standard 3 (Covalenco 10, Geraerts 23, Bangoura 54) Att: 6,500

Sunday, March 20
Ostende 1 (Zoko 28)
Mouscron 0 Att: 3,200

Saturday, April 2
Cercle Brugge 1 (Boi 4)
Beveren 1 (Tia 66) Att: 4,050

Charleroi 3 (Akgul 7, Dos Santos Costa 55, 60)
Gent 2 (De Beule 50, Martens 87) Att: 9,477

La Louviere 0
Club Brugge 2 (Verheyen 58, 87) Att: 5,576

Lierse 3 (Thompson 22, 87, Mitu 89)
Ostende 1 (Joly 85) Att: 6,577

Lokeren 0
Mons 0 Att: 4,000

Standard 3 (Sergio Conceicao 5, Bangoura 52, Kovalenko 85)
Germinal Beerschot 0 Att: 10,000

Sunday, April 3
FC Brussels 0
St Truiden 1 (Debroux 80) Att: 4,400

Genk 2 (Beslija 43, Vandenbergh 88)
Anderlecht 4 (Vanderhaeghe 58, Lovre 60, Kompany 81, Zetterberg 84) Att: 24,128

Mouscron 3 (Siljak 46, 87, Noukeu 89)
Westerlo 0 Att: 4,996

BELGIUM

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Club Brugge	27	21	4	2	68	18	67
Anderlecht	27	19	4	4	60	26	61
Standard	27	17	5	5	48	22	56
Genk	27	15	6	6	42	32	51
Gent	27	15	4	8	40	28	49
Charleroi	27	14	7	6	35	28	49
Westerlo	27	11	4	12	28	42	37
La Louviere	27	10	7	10	34	27	37
Lokeren	27	8	11	8	27	28	35
Lierse	27	9	5	13	43	50	32
Cercle Brugge	27	9	5	13	38	62	32
Beveren	27	8	7	12	38	44	31
Mouscron	27	7	6	14	35	38	27
Germinal B	27	7	6	14	26	34	27
St Truiden	27	7	6	14	29	42	27
Ostende	27	5	7	15	26	51	22
FC Brussels	27	6	2	19	23	52	20
Mons	27	5	4	18	31	47	19

LEADING GOALSCORERS
14 Sambegou Bangoura (Standard)
13 Nenad Jestrovic (Anderlecht)

BELGIAN CUP – qrt-finals, 2nd legs

Mar 16: Gent 0 Lokeren 1 *Lokeren 3-1 on agg*; Lierse 2 Charleroi 0 *Agg 3-3. Lierse on away goals.*
Apr 6: La Louviere 2 Club Brugge 3 *Club Brugge 5-4 on agg.*

Germinal Beerschot v Genk - Apr 13

BULGARIA

Mar 11: Slavia 4 Vidima-Rakovski 1; Spartak Varna 0 Lokomotiv Plovdiv 2.
Mar 12: Cherno More 3 Marek 2; Beroe 0 Pirin 0; Naftex 0 Rodopa 0; Nesebar 0 CSKA 2; Levski 0 Lovech 1.
Mar 13: Lokomotiv Sofia 5 Belasitsa 1.
Mar 19: Nesebar 1 Slavia 4; Rodopa 4 Spartak Varna 0; Lokomotiv Plovdiv 3 Beroe 0; Pirin 0 Lokomotiv Sofia 0; Belasitsa 0 Cherno More 0; Lovech 1 Vidima-Rakovski 0; Marek 0 Levski 1; CSKA 3 Naftex 0.
Apr 2: Slavia 2 Lovech 2; Vidima-Rakovski 2 Marek 1; Levski 8 Belasitsa 1; Cherno More 1 Pirin 1; Lokomotiv Sofia 2 Lokomotiv Plovdiv 0; Beroe 4 Rodopa 0; Naftex 1 Nesebar 2.
Apr 3: Spartak Varna 0 CSKA 0.
Apr 6: Naftex 0 Slavia 2; Nesebar 1 Spartak Varna 0; CSKA 4 Beroe 1; Rodopa 1 Lokomotiv Sofia 1; Lokomotiv Plovdiv 2 Cherno More 0; Pirin 0 Levski 1; Belasitsa 1 Vidima-Rakovski 0; Marek 0 Lovech 1.

BULGARIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
CSKA	21	17	4	0	60	10	55
Levski	21	17	3	1	53	11	54
Lok Plovdiv	21	14	3	4	45	17	45
Lovech	21	12	3	6	36	22	39
Slavia	21	11	5	5	35	26	38
Lok Sofia*	21	8	6	7	29	31	27
Cherno More	21	7	4	10	23	28	25
Rodopa	21	6	5	10	19	29	23
Belasitsa	21	6	5	10	15	31	23
Beroe	21	5	6	10	22	28	21
Marek	21	5	6	10	21	30	21
Pirin	21	4	9	8	16	26	21
Vidima-R'vski	21	5	4	12	23	38	19
Nesebar	21	5	4	12	18	39	19
Naftex	21	4	5	12	14	29	17
Spartak Varna	21	5	2	14	16	50	17

**3pts deducted for non-payment of wages*

CROATIA

Regular season

Mar 12: Dinamo 2 Kamen Ingrad 1; Inter 0 Pula 0; Zadar 1 Slaven 5; Varteks 1 Zagreb 0; Osijek 0 Medimurje 0; Rijeka 2 Hajduk 0.
Mar 19: Pula 2 Zadar 0; Medimurje 2 Varteks 0; Zagreb 2 Rijeka 1; Slaven 3 Dinamo 1; Kamen Ingrad 3 Osijek 1; Hajduk 2 Inter 0.

CROATIA – REGULAR SEASON – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Hajduk	22	13	3	6	39	23	42
Rijeka	22	10	8	4	37	23	38
Slaven	22	11	4	7	29	25	37
Inter	22	10	5	7	25	22	35
Varteks	22	11	1	10	39	30	34
Zagreb	22	10	3	9	27	24	33
Dinamo	22	9	6	7	38	30	33
Kamen Ingrad	22	10	2	10	30	28	32
Osijek	22	7	9	6	29	32	30
Pula	22	6	8	8	21	23	26
Zadar	22	5	1	16	25	55	16
Medimurje	22	3	4	15	18	42	13

Top six went into championship play-offs; bottom six went into relegation play-offs

Championship play-offs

Apr 2: Hajduk 0 Zagreb 1; Rijeka 1 Varteks 1; Slaven 0 Inter 1.

CROATIA – CHAMPIONSHIP PLAY-OFFS

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Hajduk	23	13	3	7	39	24	42
Rijeka	23	10	9	4	38	24	39
Inter	23	11	5	7	26	22	38
Slaven	23	11	4	8	29	26	37
Zagreb	23	11	3	9	28	24	36
Varteks	23	11	2	10	40	31	35

CZECH REPUBLIC

Mar 12: Liberec 1 Zlin 1; Ceske Budejovice 1 Sparta 2; Pribram 0 Olomouc 0; Opava 2 Brno 0; Slovacko 2 Drnovice 1.
Mar 13: Teplice 0 Jablonec 0; Chmel Blsany 0 Ostrava 2.
Mar 14: Slavia 2 Mlada Boleslav 2.
Mar 15: Pribram 1 Slovan 1.
Mar 19: Ostrava 2 Pribram 1; Sparta 2 Liberec 1.
Mar 20: Olomouc 1 Zlin 0; Jablonec 0 Opava 1; Brno 0 Ceske Budejovice 0; Drnovice 2 Slavia 1; Mlada Boleslav 1 Chmel Blsany 1.
Mar 21: Slovacko 0 Teplice 0.
Mar 27: Zlin 0 Pribram 0; Drnovice 0 Jablonec 1.
Mar 29: Ostrava 0 Opava 0; Mlada Boleslav 1 Ceske Budejovice 0.
Apr 2: Zlin 1 Ostrava 1; Liberec 1 Mlada Boleslav 3; Ceske Budejovice 2 Drnovice 1; Pribram 3 Sparta 1; Opava 2 Slovacko 2; Chmel Blsany 2 Olomouc 2.
Apr 3: Teplice 3 Brno 1.
Apr 4: Slavia 1 Jablonec 1.
Apr 5: Olomouc 2 Liberec 2.
Apr 6: Drnovice 2 Teplice 0.

CZECH REPUBLIC

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Sparta	21	16	3	2	42	17	51
Teplice	21	9	9	3	20	16	36
Slavia	20	9	6	5	29	19	33
Jablonec	21	8	8	5	21	17	32
Olomouc	21	9	5	7	24	22	32
Ostrava	21	7	9	5	24	24	30
Liberec*	21	8	8	5	31	18	26
Mlada Boleslav	21	5	9	7	23	25	24
Zlin	21	5	9	7	20	24	24
Drnovice	21	6	5	10	23	26	23
Pribram	21	5	6	10	20	33	21
Chmel Blsany	21	5	6	10	18	31	21
Brno	20	5	5	10	15	29	20
Opava*	21	5	8	8	22	25	17
Slovacko*	21	6	10	5	19	17	16
C Budejovice	21	3	6	12	17	25	15

**Slovacko had 12pts deducted and Opava and Liberec 6pts for their part in a bribery scandal*

DENMARK

Mar 12: Viborg 2 AGF 1.
Mar 13: FC Copenhagen 4 Midtjylland 0; Brondby 1 AaB 1; OB 0 Esbjerg 1.
Mar 19: AaB 3 Silkeborg 1; Herfolge 1 Viborg 1.

ESM
EUROPEAN SPORTS MAGAZINES
GOLDEN SHOE

ESM GOLDEN SHOE STANDINGS AT 03.04.05

POS	NAME	TEAM	GOALS	FACTOR	PTS
1	Thierry Henry	Arsenal (Eng)	25	2	50
2	Marek Mintal	Nurnberg (Ger)	21	2	42
3	Samuel Eto'o	Barcelona (Spa)	20	2	40
4	Vincenzo Montella	Roma (Ita)	19	2	38
5	Diego Forlan	Villarreal (Spa)	18	2	36
	Andy Johnson	Crystal Palace (Eng)	18	2	36
7	Fatih Tekke	Trabzonspor (Tur)	23	1.5	34.5
	Liedson	Sporting Lisbon (Por)	23	1.5	34.5
9	Dirk Kuijt	Feyenoord (Hol)	22	1.5	33
10	Fernando Torres	Atletico Madrid (Spa)	16	2	32
	Alberto Gilardino	Parma (Ita)	16	2	32
	Ricardo Oliveira	Betis (Spa)	16	2	32
13	Adriano	Internazionale (Ita)	15	2	30
	Delron Buckley	Arminia Bielefeld (Ger)	15	2	30
	Tomasz Frankowski	Wisla Krakow (Pol)	20	1.5	30
	Marc Lloyd-Williams	TNS (Wal)	30	1	30

For the latest standings, updated weekly, visit www.worldsoccer.com

Mar 20: Esbjerg 0 Brondby 0; FC Copenhagen 4 Randers 0; Midtjylland 0 OB 0; AGF 2 Nordsjaelland 1.
Apr 2: Brondby 0 Midtjylland 1; Silkeborg 2 Esbjerg 1.
Apr 3: Viborg 2 AaB 1; Nordsjaelland 0 Herfolge 0; OB 1 FC Copenhagen 2; Randers 1 AGF 0.
Apr 6: Silkeborg 3 Herfolge 0.

DENMARK

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Brondby	21	13	6	2	32	12	45
Midtjylland	21	11	4	6	30	28	37
FC Copenhagen	21	10	6	5	39	28	36
Viborg	21	9	7	5	26	21	34
OB	21	9	4	8	43	26	31
AaB	21	8	5	8	33	29	29
AGF	21	8	5	8	34	35	29
Esbjerg	21	7	6	8	37	33	27
Silkeborg	21	8	3	10	34	37	27
Nordsjaelland	20	4	5	11	23	39	17
Randers	20	4	5	11	21	38	17
Herfolge	21	4	4	13	16	42	16

ENGLAND

Tuesday, March 15
Chelsea 1 (Drogba 26)
West Bromwich 0 Att: 41,713

Wednesday, March 16
Charlton 2 (Thomas 4, Murphy 85)
Tottenham 0 Att: 26,870

Liverpool 0
Blackburn 0 Att: 37,763

Saturday, March 19
Blackburn 0
Arsenal 1 (Van Persie 43) Att: 22,992

Bolton 1 (Giannakopoulos 42)
Norwich 0 Att: 25,081

Charlton 1 (Johansson 24)
West Bromwich 4 (Horsfield 9, Earnshaw 73, 84, pen 90) Att: 27,104

Chelsea 4 (Lampard 28, J Cole 54, Kezman 78, 90)
Crystal Palace 1 (Riihilahti 42) Att: 41,667

Manchester Utd 1 (Cristiano Ronaldo 21)
Fulham 0 Att: 67,959

Portsmouth 1 (Stone 45)
Newcastle 1 (Dyer 43) Att: 20,165

Tottenham 2 (Defoe 16, Keane 84)
Manchester City 1 (Reyna 44) Att: 35,681

Sunday, March 20
Birmingham 2 (Heskey 52, Gray 89)
Aston Villa 0 Att: 29,382

Liverpool 2 (Gerrard 27, Luis Garcia 32)
Everton 1 (Cahill 82) Att: 44,224

Middlesbrough 1 (Hasselbaink 41)
Southampton 3 (Jakobsson 14, Crouch 60, 67) Att: 30,082

Saturday, April 2
Arsenal 4 (Henry 19, 22, 66, Ljungberg 50)
Norwich 1 (Huckerby 30) Att: 38,066

Birmingham 1 (Carter 66)
Tottenham 1 (Kelly 59) Att: 29,304

Charlton 2 (Bartlett 10, Perry 90)
Manchester City 2 (Hreidarsson og 4, Fowler 38) Att: 26,436

Crystal Palace 0
Middlesbrough 1 (Queudrue 35) Att: 24,274

Liverpool 1 (Biscan 86)
Bolton 0 Att: 43,755

Manchester Utd 0
Blackburn 0 Att: 67,939

Newcastle 0
Aston Villa 3 (Angel 5, Barry pen 73, pen 80) Att: 52,306

Southampton 1 (Phillips 69)
Chelsea 3 (Lampard 22, Gudjohnsen 39, 83) Att: 31,949

Sunday, April 3
Fulham 3 (Cole 63, McBride 81, Boa Morte 90)
Portsmouth 1 (Lua Lua 32) Att: 20,502

West Bromwich 1 (Gera 63)
Everton 0 Att: 26,805

ENGLAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Chelsea	31	25	5	1	61	11	80
Arsenal	31	20	7	4	72	33	67
Man Utd	31	19	10	2	48	17	67
Everton	31	15	6	10	35	33	51
Liverpool	31	15	5	11	44	31	50
Bolton	31	13	7	11	38	35	46
Middlesbrough	31	12	9	10	45	42	45
Charlton	31	12	8	11	37	44	44
Tottenham	31	12	7	12	38	35	43
Aston Villa	31	11	8	12	37	39	41
Newcastle	30	9	11	10	41	48	38
Man City	31	9	10	12	37	36	37
Birmingham	31	9	9	13	34	38	36
Fulham	30	9	6	15	36	48	33
Blackburn	31	7	12	12	25	37	33
Portsmouth	31	8	7	16	33	49	31
Southampton	31	5	12	14	34	48	27
West Brom	31	5	12	14	30	51	27
Crystal Palace	31	6	8	17	33	50	26
Norwich	31	3	11	17	30	63	20

LEADING GOALSCORERS
25 Thierry Henry (Arsenal)
18 Andy Johnson (Crystal Palace)
12 Jermain Defoe (Tottenham)

FA CUP – quarter-finals
Mar 12: Bolton 0 Arsenal 1; Southampton 0 Manchester United 4.
Mar 13: Blackburn 1 Leicester 0; Newcastle 1 Tottenham 0.

FRANCE

Saturday, March 12
Ajaccio 1 (Andre Luiz pen 15)
Paris SG 0 Att: 2,557

Bordeaux 2 (Darcheville 16, Chamakh 90)
Saint-Etienne 0 Att: 31,740

Lyon 2 (Juninho 20, Govou 78)
Istres 1 (N'Diaye 31) Att: 37,299

Marseille 2 (Marlet 31, 72)
Lens 1 (Utaka 29) Att: 54,350

Metz 1 (Borbiconi 23)
Rennes 1 (Frei 45) Att: 13,727

Nantes 2 (Bagayoko 13, Keseru 90)
Caen 0 Att: 27,271

Nice 0
Strasbourg 0 Att: 9,557

Sochaux 1 (Ilan 2)
Bastia 0 Att: 13,127

Sunday, March 13
Auxerre 2 (Pieroni 54, Jaures pen 77)
Monaco 2 (Rodriguez 45, Modesto 57) Att: 10,540

Lille 1 (Odemwingie 61)
Toulouse 1 (Moreira 75) Att: 12,820

Wednesday, March 16
Saint-Etienne 3 (Feindouno 52, Piquionne 64, 66)
Ajaccio 0 Att: 29,003

Sochaux 2 (Ilan pen 12, Caillet og 60)
Metz 1 (Proment pen 17) Att: 13,013

Strasbourg 0
Monaco 0 Att: 21,253

Saturday, March 19
Bastia 1 (Yahia 90)
Metz 0 Att: 4,253

Caen 2 (Eudeline 53, Watier pen 73)
Rennes 2 (Frei 61, Ouaddou 73) Att: 20,541

Istres 1 (Delaye 83)
Nice 1 (Die 34) Att: 4,745

Lens 2 (Thomert 33, Utaka 49)
Bordeaux 0 Att: 33,332

Nantes 0
Ajaccio 0 Att: 28,053

Strasbourg 0
Lyon 1 (Wiltord 59) Att: 22,442

Toulouse 0
Sochaux 0 Att: 19,162

Sunday, March 20
Monaco 2 (Maicon 25, Adebayor 44)
Marseille 1 (Bernardi og 55) Att: 18,000

Paris SG 1 (Pauleta 8)
Auxerre 0 Att: 39,896

Saint-Etienne 0
Lille 0 Att: 28,708

Saturday, April 2
Ajaccio 3 (Edson 33, 42, Andre Luiz 45)
Monaco 0 Att: 3,891

Auxerre 2 (Kaboul 83, Pironi 90)
Nantes 1 (Diallo 51) Att: 9,844

Bordeaux 0
Strasbourg 2 (Abdessadki 74, Niang 77) Att: 21,147

Lille 8 (Moussilou 13, 16, 18, 56, Bodmer 22, Brunel 28, 59, Thiam og 65)
Istres 0 Att: 14,756

Lyon 1 (Juninho 64)
Lens 0 Att: 37,669

Metz 0
Toulouse 1 (Sirieix 36) Att: 15,626

Nice 2 (Vahirua 10, Larbi 35)
Saint-Etienne 0 Att: 12,075

Rennes 1 (Kallstrom 28)
Bastia 0 Att: 23,343

Sochaux 1 (Ilan 65)
Caen 0 Att: 13,755

Sunday, April 3
Marseille 1 (Batiles 75)
Paris SG 1 (Nakata og 46) Att: 55,000

FRANCE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Lyon	31	18	11	2	43	17	65
Lille	31	13	13	5	41	21	52
Marseille	31	15	7	9	39	30	52
Monaco	31	12	14	5	40	29	50
Auxerre	30	13	7	10	41	34	46
Toulouse	30	12	10	8	30	27	46
Sochaux	31	12	9	10	34	28	45
Rennes	31	12	8	11	37	34	44
Saint-Etienne	31	9	14	8	37	29	41
Lens	31	10	11	10	33	29	41
Paris SG	31	9	13	9	30	33	40
Bordeaux	31	8	15	8	31	29	39
Nice	31	8	13	10	35	41	37
Strasbourg	31	8	11	12	33	35	35
Nantes	31	8	10	13	25	30	34
Metz	31	7	12	12	25	37	33
Ajaccio	31	6	14	11	24	32	32
Caen	31	6	12	13	25	51	30
Bastia	31	7	8	16	22	36	29
Istres	31	3	14	14	18	41	23

LEADING GOALSCORERS
14 Alexander Frei (Rennes)
12 Mickael Pagis (Strasbourg)
12 Pauleta (Paris SG)

FRENCH CUP – last 16
Mar 16: Boulogne-sur-Mer 3 Nantes 2.

Already through: Auxerre, Clermont Foot, Grenoble, Monaco, Nimes, Sedan, Sochaux

GERMANY

Saturday, March 12
Arminia Bielefeld 3 (Porcello 21, Vata 27, Buckley 87)
Hamburg 4 (Lauth 2, Barbarez 38, Boulahrouz 43, Mahdavikia 71) Att: 26,601

Bayer Leverkusen 3 (Ponte 5, Butt pen 12, Voronin 84)
Hertha 3 (Marcelinho 24, 29, Neuendorf 62) Att: 22,500

Freiburg 2 (Koejoe 7, Bajramovic 59)
Nurnberg 3 (L Muller 23, Mintal 85, 90) Att: 17,000

Hansa Rostock 3 (Di Salvo 36, 49, Prica 52)
Bochum 1 (Edu 70) Att: 18,600

Kaiserslautern 1 (Altintop 45)
Monchengladbach 0 Att: 39,906

Werder Bremen 0
Mainz 0 Att: 39,301

Wolfsburg 1 (Menseguez 6)
Hannover 0 Att: 25,921

Sunday, March 13
Borussia Dortmund 0
Stuttgart 2 (Meissner 43, 90) Att: 75,000

Schalke 1 (Lincoln 69)
Bayern Munich 0 Att: 61,524

Saturday, March 19
Bayer Leverkusen 2 (Callsen-Bracker 13, Voronin 46)
Kaiserslautern 0 Att: 22,500

Bayern Munich 3 (Lucio 41, Pizarro 65, Ballack pen 89)
Hansa Rostock 1 (Mohrle 16) Att: 52,000

Bochum 5 (Edu 15, 38, Wosz 24, Lokvenc 39, Madsen 57)
Wolfsburg 1 (Petrov 73) Att: 20,133

Hamburg 2 (Benjamin 29, Beinlich 57)
Borussia Dortmund 3 (Rosicky 10, Ricken 61, Ewerthon 86) Att: 55,500

Hannover 2 (Stajner 59, Vinicius 74)
Monchengladbach 1 (Sverkos 31) Att: 36,725

Hertha 3 (Marx 29, 56, Basturk 90)
Arminia Bielefeld 0 Att: 38,114

Nurnberg 1 (Kiessling 68)
Werder Bremen 2 (Klasnic 22, 45) Att: 27,525

Sunday, March 20
Mainz 2 (Gerber 1, Thurk 79)
Schalke 1 (Lincoln pen 70) Att: 20,300

Stuttgart 1 (Babbel 20)
Freiburg 0 Att: 41,000

Saturday, April 2
Arminia Bielefeld 1 (Dalovic 66)
Bayer Leverkusen 0 Att: 24,092

Freiburg 1 (Kruppke 19)
Hamburg 1 (Moreira 40) Att: 23,500

Hansa Rostock 2 (T Rasmussen 41, Hartmann 58)
Mainz 0 Att: 22,000

Kaiserslautern 0
Hannover 2 (Kaufman 72, 90) Att: 32,337

Schalke 4 (Hanke 24, 36, Ailton 40, Lincoln 74)
Nurnberg 1 (Slovak 55) Att: 61,524

Werder Bremen 1 (Klasnic 52)
Stuttgart 2 (Meissner 48, Tiffert 86) Att: 40,710

Wolfsburg 0
Bayern Munich 3 (Schweinsteiger 29, Hofland og 45, Frings 55) Att: 30,000

Sunday, April 3
Borussia Dortmund 2 (Ewerthon 24, Smolarek 36)
Hertha 1 (Friedrich 62) Att: 76,100

Monchengladbach 2 (Kluge 30, Jansen 52)
Bochum 2 (Lokvenc 70, Pletsch og 90) Att: 49,451

GERMANY

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Bayern Munich	27	17	5	5	52	25	56
Schalke	27	18	2	7	45	30	56
Stuttgart	27	15	6	6	48	31	51
Werder Bremen	27	14	5	8	56	30	47
Hertha	27	11	11	5	47	26	44
Hamburg	27	14	2	11	48	43	44
B Leverkusen	27	12	7	8	47	35	43
Hannover	27	11	5	11	31	30	38
B Dortmund	27	10	8	9	34	37	38
Wolfsburg	27	12	1	14	41	44	37
Kaiserslautern	27	10	6	11	33	36	36
A Bielefeld	27	10	5	12	31	37	35
Mainz	27	8	6	13	34	43	30
M'gladbach	27	7	8	12	30	43	29
Nurnberg	27	7	7	13	45	53	28
Bochum	27	5	8	14	37	56	23
Hansa Rostock	27	5	8	14	25	51	23
Freiburg	27	3	8	16	21	55	17

LEADING GOALSCORERS
21 Marek Mintal (Nurnberg)
15 Delron Buckley (Arminia Bielefeld)
13 Ailton (Schalke)

GREECE

Mar 12: Panathinaikos 0 Iraklis 0; Apollon 3 Panionios 3.
Mar 13: Olympiakos 1 AEK 1; Aigaleo 1 Kerkira 0; Halkidona 2 Xanthi 1; Kallithea 0 Ionikos 0; Aris 3 OFI 2; Ergotelis 0 PAOK 1.
Mar 19: Xanthi 1 Kerkira 1; Kallithea 0 Panathinaikos 2.
Mar 20: PAOK 2 Halkidona 1; AEK 3 Ergotelis 0; Panionios 0 Aigaleo 0; Iraklis 2 Apollon 3; OFI 1 Olympiakos 1; Ionikos 2 Aris 1.
Apr 2: PAOK 1 Xanthi 0; Halkidona 1 AEK 1.
Apr 3: Panathinaikos 0 Aris 0; Olympiakos 2 Ionikos 1; Aigaleo 1 Iraklis 0; Kerkira 1 Panionios 3; Apollon 1 Kallithea 2; Ergotelis 0 OFI 1.

GREECE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Olympiakos	24	14	8	2	42	15	50
Panathinaikos	24	15	5	4	38	12	50
AEK	24	13	10	1	36	18	49
PAOK	24	12	5	7	34	28	41
Xanthi	24	11	7	6	36	25	40
Aigaleo	24	7	12	5	20	18	33
Halkidona	24	8	8	8	24	25	32
Panionios	24	7	9	8	20	22	30
Iraklis	24	8	5	11	22	25	29
OFI	24	7	7	10	31	34	28
Kallithea	24	6	9	9	32	36	27
Ionikos	24	5	9	10	17	30	24
Aris	24	4	11	9	21	29	23
Apollon	24	5	8	11	25	41	23
Ergotelis	24	5	4	15	17	40	19
Kerkira	24	3	7	14	17	34	16

HOLLAND

Friday, March 11
Twente 3 (Shoukov 12, Touma 38, Culina 88)
RBC 0 Att: 13,100

Saturday, March 12
Heerenveen 1 (Samaras 82)
RKC 2 (Oost 78, Putter 85) Att: 19,700

NAC 1 (Boussaboun 85)
Vitesse 2 (Amoah 23, Knopper 83) Att: 12,472

Willem II 2 (Denissen 74, Caluwe 86)
Den Bosch 1 (Van de Laak pen 37) Att: 11,900

Sunday, March 13
AZ 3 (Kromkamp 40, Landzaat 45, Elkhattabi 70)
De Graafschap 2 (Magno 25, 90) Att: 8,145

Feyenoord 4 (Ono 6, Castelen 23, Kuijt pen 70, Kalou 85)
Roda JC 1 (Ostlund og 53) Att: 33,000

NEC 0
Ajax 1 (Maduro 51) Att: 12,500

PSV 4 (Park 6, 42, Van Bommel 28, Alex 88)
Den Haag 0 Att: 31,000

Utrecht 1 (Cornelisse 17)
Groningen 2 (Nevland 7, 41) Att: 18,415

Wednesday, March 16
Den Haag 0
Heerenveen 2 (Vayrynen 4, Bruggink pen 74) Att: 6,624

Thursday, March 17
Groningen 0
PSV 1 (Farfan 45) Att: 12,500

Friday, March 18
Den Bosch 0
Roda JC 3 (Cisse 26, Bodnar 45, Jongen 90) Att: 5,688

Saturday, March 19
AZ 3 (Jaliens 44, Landzaat pen 80, Lindenbergh 87)
Vitesse 0 Att: 8,559

De Graafschap 0
RBC 1 (De Groot 68) Att: 11,000

NAC 1 (Mendes da Silva 68)
NEC 2 (Tininho 78, Ebbinge 85) Att: 12,389

RKC 2 (Vasconcelos 6, Krohn-Dehli 26)
Feyenoord 4 (Castelen 24, 90, Kalou 33, Lazovic 89) Att: 6,500

Sunday, March 20
Ajax 0
PSV 4 (Cocu 24, Van Bommel 45, pen 54, 59) Att: 50,765

Groningen 1 (Nevland 85)
Willem II 1 (Bobson 21) Att: 11,568

Twente 2 (Cziommer 5, N'Kufo pen 90)
Den Haag 1 (Zomer og 47) Att: 13,000

Utrecht 0
Heerenveen 1 (Yildirim 25) Att: 20,545

Friday, April 1
Vitesse 1 (Knopper 22)
Twente 1 (N'Kufo pen 54) Att: 20,142

Saturday, April 2
Den Haag 0
RKC 0 Att: 6,800

Heerenveen 2 (Seip 63, Samaras 87)
Ajax 1 (Haristeas 34) Att: 19,000

PSV 2 (Vennegoor of Hesselink 37, Park 42)
Utrecht 0 Att: 31,600

Willem II 4 (Ceesay 42, Bobson 48, Agustien 55, Denissen 90)
De Graafschap 1 (Ax 33) Att: 12,600

Sunday, April 3
Feyenoord 4 (Kalou 19, 47, 64, Castelen 43)
AZ 2 (Nelisse 49, Buskermolen 88) Att: 45,000

NEC 4 (Barreto 14, Van den Eede 24, 69, Niedzielan 80)
Groningen 3 (Hugo 34, Seedorf 45, Van Gessel 60) Att: 11,000

RBC 1 (De Groot 5)
Den Bosch 2 (Janssen 6, 49) Att: 4,500

Roda JC 2 (Sergio 50, Kone 76)
NAC 1 (Mendes da Silva 43) Att: 11,870

Thursday, April 7
Ajax 2 (Mitea 20, Babel 90)
Willem II 0 Att: 35,000

HOLLAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
PSV	27	22	4	1	72	13	70
AZ	26	18	6	2	61	22	60
Ajax	27	17	5	5	54	27	56
Feyenoord	26	16	5	5	74	32	53
Vitesse	27	13	5	9	44	37	44
Heerenveen	27	13	5	9	44	43	44
Twente	27	12	6	9	36	30	42
Roda JC	27	10	6	11	47	44	36
Utrecht	27	10	6	11	29	31	36
RKC	27	9	8	10	34	38	35
Groningen	27	9	6	12	38	45	33
Willem II	28	9	5	14	33	52	32
NAC	27	8	6	13	35	53	30
NEC	27	7	8	12	31	39	29
Den Haag	27	7	6	14	30	43	27
RBC	27	6	2	19	26	60	20
De Graafschap	27	4	6	17	28	62	18
Den Bosch	26	3	3	20	15	60	12

LEADING GOALSCORERS
22 Dirk Kuijt (Feyenoord)
17 Salomon Kalou (Feyenoord)
15 Jan Vennegoor of Hesselink (PSV)

HUNGARY

Mar 12: Papa 1 Diosgyor 2; Debrecen 2 Honved 0; Ujpest 3 Fehervar*** 0; Vasas 2 Kaposvar 1; Pecs 1 Zalaegerszeg 0.
Mar 13: Ferencvaros 0 Gyor 1.
Mar 16: Nyiregyhaza 1 Vasas 2; Diosgyor 2 Ferencvaros 3; Gyor 1 Debrecen 0; Kaposvar 4 Matav 3; Honved 2 Pecs 1; MTK 3 Ujpest 1; Fehervar 2 Papa 1; Zalaegerszeg 1 Bekescsaba 1.
Mar 19: Papa 0 MTK 1; Ferencvaros 0 Fehervar 1; Matav 5 Nyiregyhaza 2; Vasas 3 Bekescsaba 0; Zalaegerszeg 1 Honved 3; Pecs 1 Gyor 1; Debrecen 1 Diosgyor 0.
Mar 20: Ujpest 1 Kaposvar 1.
Apr 2: Nyiregyhaza 2 Ujpest 2; Gyor 4 Zalaegerszeg 1; Bekescsaba 3 Honved 0; Kaposvar 1 Papa 2; Diosgyor 1 Pecs 0; Fehervar 2 Debrecen 2; Vasas 0 Matav 1.
Apr 3: MTK 3 Ferencvaros 1.

****Formerly Videoton*

HUNGARY

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Debrecen	19	12	3	4	32	15	39
Ferencvaros	19	12	2	5	43	19	38
Gyor	19	10	4	5	26	18	34
MTK*	18	10	4	4	29	17	33
Ujpest	19	8	7	4	34	24	31
Zalaegerszeg	19	8	4	7	29	29	28
Fehervar**	19	8	6	5	28	20	27
Honved	19	8	2	9	29	40	26
Vasas	19	8	1	10	28	26	25
Matav	18	7	4	7	29	31	25
Kaposvar	19	6	4	9	25	35	22
Pecs	19	5	5	9	19	25	20
Diosgyor	19	6	1	12	20	33	19
Papa	19	5	3	11	25	30	18
Bekescsaba	18	4	5	9	18	35	17
Nyiregyhaza	18	2	7	9	23	40	13

**1pt deducted for non-payment of wages to a former coach*
***3pts deducted for non-payment of three former players*

ITALY

Saturday, March 12
Lazio 1 (A Filippini 45)
Inter 1 (Cruz 70) Att: 49,787

Lecce 2 (Dalla Bona 28, Vucinic 30)
Fiorentina 2 (Jorgensen 47, Maggio 86) Att: 14,729

Sunday, March 13
Atalanta 1 (Adriano 79)
Parma 0 Att: 14,361

Bologna 1 (Bellucci pen 56)
Siena 1 (Colucci og 65) Att: 16,593

Brescia 2 (Caracciolo pen 16, 89)
Livorno 3 (Doga 51, Protti pen 71, Danilevicius 86) Att: 7,261

Cagliari 3 (Zola 24, Esposito 41, Suazo 48)
Roma 0 Att: 22,500

Chievo 0
Juventus 1 (Olivera 87) Att: 24,514

Milan 1 (Kaka 65)
Sampdoria 0 Att: 69,441

Palermo 1 (Santana 70)
Udinese 5 (Di Michele 29, 36, 54, Muntari 45, Iaquinta 82) Att: 33,108

Reggina 0
Messina 2 (Cristante 12, D'Agostino 40) Att: 17,227

Saturday, March 19
Juventus 1 (Del Piero 65)
Reggina 0 Att: 21,189

Siena 1 (Tudor 60)
Lazio 0 Att: 10,509

Sunday, March 20
Chievo 3 (D'Anna pen 61, Pellissier 81, 88)
Brescia 1 (Mareco 19) Att: 8,143

Inter 3 (Cambiasso 27, Veron 52, Cordoba 65)
Fiorentina 2 (Pazzini 40, Cordoba og 87) Att: 57,157

Livorno 3 (C Lucarelli 37, 63, Protti 39)
Cagliari 3 (Suazo 42, pen 45, Abeijon 90) Att: 14,357

Messina 0
Bologna 0 Att: 25,322

Parma 3 (Morfeo 20, Gilardino pen 51, 90)
Palermo 3 (Brienza 13, 48, Toni pen 35) Att: 14,241

Roma 0
Milan 2 (Crespo 63, Pirlo pen 71) Att: 59,496

Sampdoria 1 (Doni 30)
Atalanta 2 (Makinwa 3, Natali 67) Att: 22,964

Udinese 2 (Di Michele 41, 89)
Lecce 1 (Pinardi 30) Att: 14,596

ITALY

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Milan	29	20	6	3	49	17	66
Juventus	29	20	6	3	47	16	66
Inter	29	11	17	1	53	35	50
Udinese	29	14	6	9	43	29	48
Sampdoria	29	14	5	10	32	23	47
Palermo	29	11	11	7	34	29	44
Bologna	29	9	11	9	28	26	38
Roma	29	10	8	11	46	45	38
Cagliari	29	10	8	11	44	48	38
Lecce	29	9	9	11	49	51	36
Livorno	29	9	9	11	34	40	36
Messina	29	9	9	11	32	40	36
Reggina	29	9	8	12	28	34	35
Lazio	29	9	7	13	35	39	34
Fiorentina	29	7	10	12	31	40	31
Chievo	29	8	7	14	24	40	31
Parma	29	7	9	13	33	48	30
Siena	29	5	14	10	28	42	29
Brescia	29	7	5	17	24	40	26
Atalanta	29	5	9	15	26	38	24

LEADING GOALSCORERS
19 Vincenzo Montella (Roma)
16 Alberto Gilardino (Parma)
15 Adriano (Inter)

ITALIAN CUP – qrt-finals, 2nd legs

Mar 16: Fiorentina 1 Roma 0 (aet)
Agg 1-1. Roma 7-6 on pens;
Udinese 4 Milan 1 *Udinese 6-4 on agg.*
Mar 17: Sampdoria 3 Cagliari 2
Cagliari 4-3 on agg.

Already through: Inter

POLAND

Mar 11: Legia 3 Pogon 0.
Mar 12: Wisla K 1 Katowice 0.
Mar 13: Groclin 5 Polonia 0.
Mar 18: Cracovia 0 Gornik L 0.
Mar 19: Legia 1 Amica 1; Zaglebie 1 Odra 1; Pogon 0 Gornik Z 2; Wisla P 2 Lech 1; Katowice 1 Groclin 3.
Mar 20: Polonia 1 Wisla K 3.
Mar 23: Gornik L 1 Polonia 1.
Apr 2: Zaglebie 0 Legia 0; Groclin 1 Wisla P 2.

POLAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Wisla K	15	13	2	0	48	9	41
Legia	16	9	5	2	24	12	32
Groclin	16	10	1	5	31	19	31
Amica	14	7	4	3	20	13	25
Wisla P	15	7	2	6	21	22	23
Zaglebie	15	5	6	4	23	23	21
Cracovia	14	5	4	5	20	14	19
Polonia	16	5	4	7	17	30	19
Gornik Z	14	4	4	6	19	17	16
Pogon	15	4	3	8	19	32	15
Odra	14	4	2	8	15	19	14
Gornik L	15	4	2	9	14	24	14
Lech	14	3	3	8	17	29	12
Katowice	15	2	2	11	14	39	8

PORTUGAL

Friday, March 11
FC Porto 0
Nacional 4 (Miguel Fidalgo 4, Alonso 60, Nuno Viveiros 69, Bruno 84)

Saturday, March 12
Benfica 2 (Mantorras 52, Miguel 88)
Gil Vicente 0

Sporting Braga 1 (Wender pen 69)
Maritimo 1 (Pena 51)

Sunday, March 13
Academica 0
Rio Ave 0

Beira Mar 2 (Ahamada 57, McPhee 90)
Estoril 1 (Joao Paulo 25)

Guimaraes 3 (Silva 15, 45, Djurdjevic 66)
Setubal 1 (Meyong 23)

Moreirense 0
Uniao Leiria 0

Sporting Lisbon 0
Penafiel 2 (Roberto 66, N'Doye 81)

Monday, March 14
Boavista 2 (Guga 7, Jose Manuel pen 90)
Belenenses 0

Friday, March 18
Maritimo 1 (Rogerio Matias og 68)
Guimaraes 2 (Alex 7, 79)

Saturday, March 19
Penafiel 1 (Odair 29)
Boavista 1 (Carlos Fernandes 55)

Setubal 0
Benfica 2 (Manuel Fernandes 43, Geovanni 64)

Sunday, March 20
Belenenses 2 (Marco Paulo 50, 90)
Beira Mar 0

Estoril 2 (Joao Paulo 17, Fellahi 54)
Moreirense 0

Gil Vicente 3 (Carlos Carneiro 21, Luis Coentrao 38, Nuno Amaro 80)
Nacional 2 (Alonso 45, Bruno 90)

Rio Ave 1 (Evandro 22)
Sporting Braga 1 (Joao Tomas 61)

Uniao Leiria 1 (Ferreira 68)
Academica 2 (Paulo Adriano 12, Dario 16)

Monday, March 21
Sporting Lisbon 2 (Liedson pen 62, Carlos Martins 90)
FC Porto 0

Friday, April 1
Guimaraes 0
Rio Ave 0

Saturday, April 2
Boavista 0
Sporting Lisbon 4 (Liedson 19, pen 68, Beto 28, Carlos Martins 82)

Sunday, April 3
Academica 1 (Ze Castro 6)
Estoril 0

Beira Mar 1 (McPhee 17)
Penafiel 3 (Roberto 58, Wesley 65, Clayton 85)

Benfica 4 (Nuno Gomes 6, 22, Miguel 11, Mantorras 86)
Maritimo 3 (Pena 7, 49, Van der Gaag 30)

Moreirense 0
Belenenses 1 (Sousa 84)

Nacional 1 (Eder og 77)
Setubal 3 (Ricardo Chaves 30, Bruno Moraes 52, Jorginho 84)

FC Porto 1 (Helder Postiga 36)
Gil Vicente 0

Monday, April 4
Sporting Braga 1 (Vandinho 39)
Uniao Leiria 0

PORTUGAL

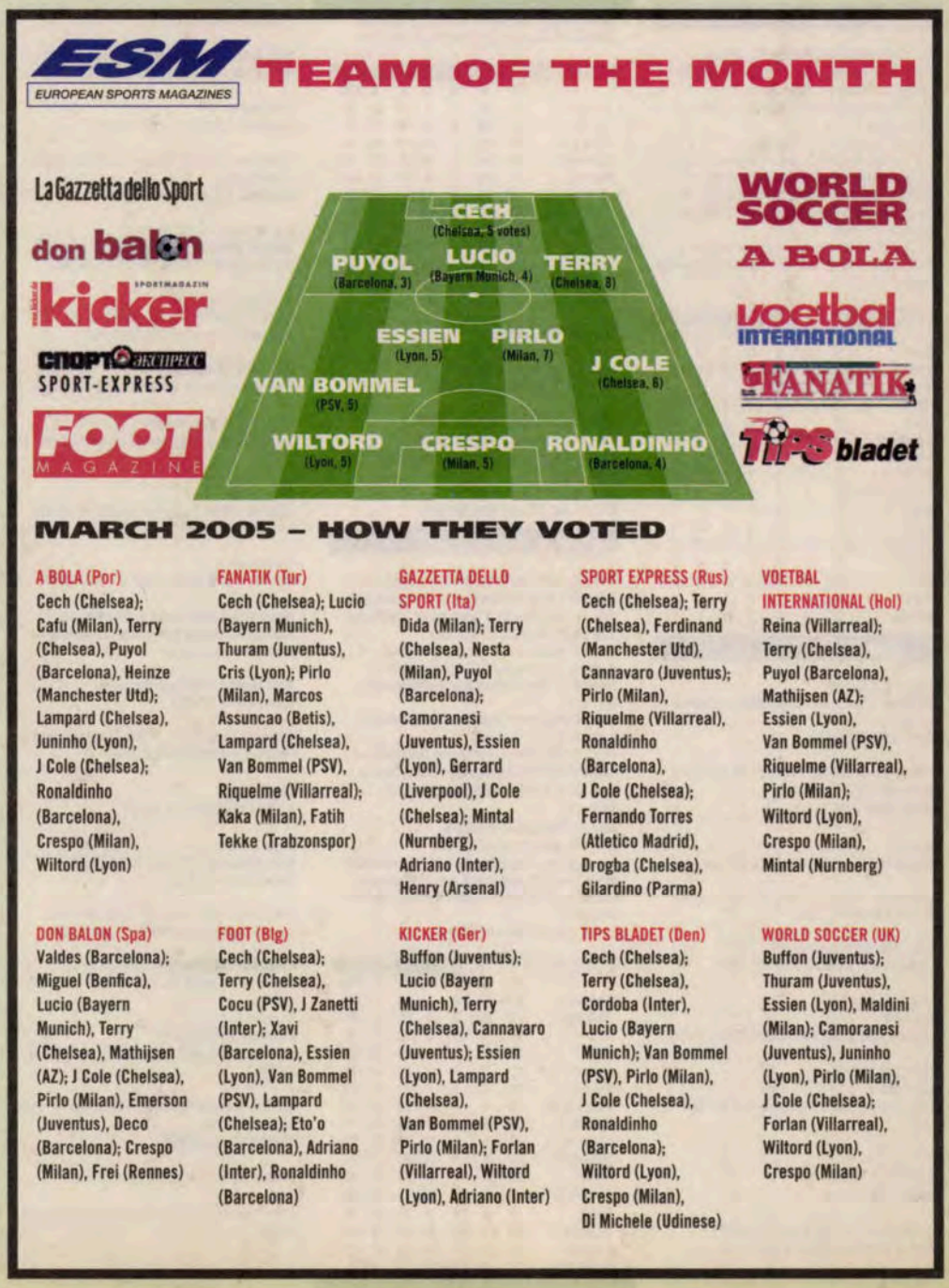
	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Benfica	27	16	6	5	45	26	54
Sporting Lisbon	27	14	6	7	56	30	48
Sporting Braga	27	13	9	5	38	20	48
FC Porto	27	13	9	5	31	22	48
Boavista	27	12	9	6	35	35	45
Guimaraes	27	11	8	8	30	24	41
Rio Ave	27	8	15	4	31	30	39
Belenenses	27	11	5	11	36	30	38
Maritimo	27	8	12	7	31	28	36
Setubal	27	9	8	10	38	38	35
Nacional	27	10	4	13	36	38	34
Uniao Leiria	27	7	12	8	26	26	33
Penafiel	27	9	4	14	30	43	31
Academica	27	7	7	13	23	35	28
Gil Vicente	27	7	5	15	27	36	26
Estoril	27	7	5	15	32	44	26
Moreirense	27	5	10	12	21	36	25
Beira Mar	27	5	8	14	26	51	23

LEADING GOALSCORERS

23	Liedson (Sporting Lisbon)
13	Simao Sabrosa (Benfica)
12	Antchouet (Belenenses)
11	Wesley (Penafiel)

ROMANIA

Mar 11: Brasov 1 National 1; Poli Timisoara* 3 CFR Cluj 0.
Mar 12: Otelul 1 Bacau 0; U Craiova 1 Arges 2; Rapid 2 Poli Iasi 0.
Mar 13: Apulum 0 Sportul 4; Dinamo 2 Farul 0.
Mar 18: Bacau 0 Brasov 0.
Mar 19: Farul 2 U Craiova 1; CFR Cluj 1 Gloria 2; Sportul 0 Dinamo 1; National 1 Poli Timisoara 2.
Mar 20: Arges 1 Otelul 1; Poli Iasi 1 Apulum 0.
Apr 1: Arges 1 Farul 1; U Craiova 0 Sportul 1.
Apr 2: Gloria 0 National 0; Poli Timisoara 2 Bacau 1; Dinamo 2 Poli Iasi 0.



Apr 3: Apulum 1 Steaua 1; Otelul 1 Brasov 1; Rapid 3 CFR Cluj 0.
Apr 6: Gloria 0 Steaua 2.

**Formerly Poli AEK*

ROMANIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Steaua	17	11	4	2	36	14	37
Dinamo	18	12	0	6	34	20	36
Rapid	17	10	3	4	29	16	33
Farul	18	9	4	5	25	17	31
National	18	8	5	5	28	20	29
Sportul	18	7	4	7	22	19	25
Otelul	18	7	4	7	14	14	25
Gloria	18	7	3	8	29	27	24
CFR Cluj	18	6	6	6	24	27	24
Poli Timisoara	18	7	3	8	24	28	24
Bacau	18	5	6	7	12	16	21
Arges	18	4	8	6	22	28	20
Poli Iasi	18	5	4	9	17	29	19
Brasov	18	4	5	9	20	28	17
Apulum	18	4	4	10	18	40	16
U Craiova	18	3	5	10	16	27	14

RUSSIA

Mar 12: Spartak 0 FC Moscow 2; Shinnik 1 Amkar 1; Zenit 4 Dinamo 1; Kryliya Sovetov 2 Alaniya 0; Lokomotiv 2 Tom 0.
Mar 13: Saturn 0 Rubin 0; Torpedo 3 Rostov 1; CSKA 3 Terek 0.
Mar 19: Lokomotiv 0 FC Moscow 0.
Mar 20: Tom 0 CSKA 0; Terek 2 Kryliya Sovetov 0; Alaniya 0 Zenit 3; Rostov 2 Shinnik 2; Spartak 3 Rubin 0; Saturn 2 Amkar 0; Dinamo 2 Torpedo 1.
Apr 2: Torpedo 3 Alaniya 0; Dinamo 1 Shinnik 0; FC Moscow 0 Rubin 1.
Apr 3: CSKA 0 Lokomotiv 0; Kryliya Sovetov 1 Tom 1; Zenit 5 Terek 1; Saturn 2 Rostov 0; Spartak 1 Amkar 1.

RUSSIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Zenit	3	3	0	0	12	2	9
Saturn	3	2	1	0	4	0	7
Torpedo	3	2	0	1	7	3	6
Dinamo	3	2	0	1	4	5	6
CSKA	3	1	2	0	3	0	5
Lokomotiv	3	1	2	0	2	0	5
Spartak	3	1	1	1	4	3	4
FC Moscow	3	1	1	1	2	1	4
Kryliya Sovetov	3	1	1	1	3	3	4
Rubin	3	1	1	1	1	3	4
Terek	3	1	0	2	3	8	3
Shinnik	3	0	2	1	3	4	2
Amkar	3	0	2	1	2	4	2
Tom	3	0	2	1	1	3	2
Rostov	3	0	1	2	3	7	1
Alaniya	3	0	0	3	0	8	0

SCOTLAND

Saturday, March 12
Aberdeen 3 (Anderson 12, Whelan 13, Mackie pen 85)
Hibernian 0 Att: 14,465

Celtic 6 (Hartson 9, 69, McGeady 62, Petrov 72, 75, Beattie 89)
Dunfermline 0 Att: 58,908

Hearts 0
Inverness 2 (Dods 55, Wilson pen 73) Att: 9,822

Kilmarnock 3 (Boyd 27, pen 78, Invincible 88)
Dundee Utd 0 Att: 4,353

Livingston 1 (Craigan og 81)
Motherwell 1 (McDonald 19) Att: 4,609

Sunday, March 13
Dundee 0
Rangers 2 (Andrews 82, Ricksen 84) Att: 9,876

Wednesday, March 16
Inverness 0
Celtic 2 (Bellamy 63, Thompson pen 84) Att: 7,045

Saturday, March 19
Aberdeen 1 (Whelan 63)
Dundee 1 (McManus 73) Att: 10,474

Dundee Utd 2 (McIntyre 24, Robson 71)
Celtic 3 (Bellamy 5, 34, 80) Att: 10,828

Dunfermline 1 (Nicholson 43)
Hibernian 4 (Riordan 66, 81, Fletcher 69, 75) Att: 7,204

Hearts 3 (Miller 22, Burchill 65, Neilson 68)
Livingston 1 (Dair 45) Att: 9,187

Saturday, April 2
Celtic 0
Hearts 2 (Miller 8, Burchill 19) Att: 59,562

Dundee 1 (Lovell pen 63)
Kilmarnock 0 Att: 5,494

Hibernian 3 (Shiels 35, O'Connor 69, Smith 90)
Dundee Utd 2 (McIntyre 63, Scotland 77) Att: 11,058

Inverness 0
Aberdeen 1 (Whelan 39) Att: 7,026

Livingston 1 (Kachloul 78)
Dunfermline 1 (Hunt 79) Att: 4,573

Sunday, April 3
Motherwell 2 (McBride pen 71, Corrigan 84)
Rangers 3 (Vignal 4, 32, Prso 51) Att: 10,210

SCOTLAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Rangers	31	24	6	1	66	16	78
Celtic	31	25	2	4	70	26	77
Hibernian	31	16	5	10	54	45	53
Aberdeen	31	15	7	9	35	27	52
Hearts	31	13	9	9	37	29	48
Motherwell	30	11	6	13	37	38	39
Kilmarnock	31	11	2	18	38	51	35
Inverness	30	8	9	13	34	40	33
Dundee	31	7	7	17	30	57	28
Dunfermline	31	6	9	16	27	51	27
Livingston	31	6	6	19	26	53	24
Dundee Utd	31	4	10	17	33	54	22

LEADING GOALSCORERS
19 John Hartson (Celtic)
18 Nacho Novo (Rangers)
18 Derek Riordan (Hibernian)

LEAGUE CUP – Final

Mar 20 - Hampden Park, Glasgow
Rangers 5 (Ross 5, Kyrgiakos 9, 86, Ricksen 33, Novo 48)
Motherwell 1 (Partridge 13)
HT: 3-1. **Att:** 50,182. **Ref:** McCurry

SERBIA & MONTENEGRO

Mar 12: Borac 0 OFK 2; Red Star 3 Vojvodina 0; Zeleznik 1 Zemun 0; Buducnost P 4 Hajduk B 0.
Mar 13: Radnicki NB 3 Cukaricki 0; Smederevo 1 Sutjeska 1; Hajduk K 0 Partizan 1.
Mar 19: Hajduk K 1 Borac 1; Cukaricki 3 Buducnost P 1; Hajduk B 1 Obilic 2; Zeta 1 Zeleznik 0; Zemun 0 Red Star 0; Vojvodina 0 OFK 1.
Mar 20: Partizan 4 Smederevo 1; Sutjeska 0 Radnicki NB 1.
Mar 23: Cukaricki 1 Smederevo 1; Hajduk B 0 Radnicki NB 3; OFK 0 Red Star 1; Vojvodina 2 Zeleznik 0; Zemun 2 Obilic 0; Sutjeska 0 Hajduk K 2.
Mar 26: Partizan 3 Sutjeska 0.
Mar 30: Radnicki NB 3 Zeta 0.
Apr 2: Borac 3 Vojvodina 0; Obilic 1 Cukaricki 0; OFK 4 Zemun 0; Red Star 2 Zeta 1; Smederevo 3 Hajduk K 1; Zeleznik 3 Hajduk B 0; Buducnost P 1 Sutjeska 0.
Apr 3: Radnicki NB 1 Partizan 2.

SERBIA & MONTENEGRO

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Partizan	19	17	2	0	49	10	53
Red Star	20	16	3	1	46	12	51
Zeta	19	12	2	5	32	17	38
OFK	20	11	1	8	31	22	34
Buducnost P	20	9	3	8	27	24	30
Zemun	20	8	5	7	21	24	29
Radnicki NB	20	8	4	8	24	22	28
Hajduk K	20	6	7	7	21	23	25
Smederevo	20	5	8	7	16	23	23
Vojvodina	20	6	4	10	20	27	22
Obilic	19	6	4	9	20	30	22
Cukaricki	20	5	5	10	19	25	20
Borac	19	5	5	9	16	27	20
Sutjeska	20	5	5	10	14	29	20
Zeleznik	20	4	4	12	19	31	16
Hajduk B	20	1	6	13	13	42	9

SPAIN

Saturday, March 12
Barcelona 2 (Deco 21, Giuly 38)
Athletic Bilbao 0 Att: 81,701

Malaga 1 (Fernando Baiano 25)
Betis 2 (Juanito 4, Edu 17) Att: 22,000

Sunday, March 13
Albacete 0
Deportivo La Coruna 1 (Coloccini 37) Att: 15,000

Atletico Madrid 1 (Fernando Torres 12)
Valencia 0 Att: 50,000

Getafe 2 (Albiol 36, Riki 47)
Real Madrid 1 (Solari 90) Att: 14,400

Levante 4 (Juanma 7, 21, Manchev 35, Sergio Garcia 63)
Osasuna 0 Att: 15,700

Racing Santander 3 (Anderson Silva 1, Aganzo 4, Benayoun 51)
Mallorca 0 Att: 14,112

Real Sociedad 2 (Kovacevic 7, Barkero 85)
Numancia 1 (Tevenet 49) Att: 21,346

Sevilla 0
Zaragoza 1 (Milito 33) Att: 40,000

Villarreal 4 (Forlan 25, Sorin 50, Riquelme 57, Figueroa 82)
Espanyol 1 (Lopo 30) Att: 20,000

Wednesday, March 16
Athletic Bilbao 1 (Ezquerro 36)
Getafe 2 (Kome 64, Michel 80) Att: 26,000

Saturday, March 19
Betis 2 (Rivas 17, Marcos Assuncao 59)
Albacete 1 (Gonzalez 75) Att: 30,000

Deportivo La Coruna 0
Barcelona 1 (Giuly 10) Att: 35,000

Espanyol 2 (Tamudo pen 37, pen 57)
Real Sociedad 2 (Kovacevic 24, De Paula 78) Att: 19,850

Sunday, March 20
Athletic Bilbao 3 (Llorente 12, 52, Urzaiz 87)
Levante 1 (Juanma 73) Att: 30,000

Mallorca 0
Sevilla 1 (Julio Baptista pen 45) Att: 17,000

Numancia 2 (Pablo Sanz 5, Tarantino 40)
Racing Santander 3 (Regueiro 23, Aganzo 44, Arizmendi 54) Att: 9,000

Real Madrid 1 (Roberto Carlos 61)
Malaga 0 Att: 75,000

Valencia 3 (Rufete 31, Di Vaio 35, Mista pen 62)
Getafe 1 (Pernia 73) Att: 45,000

Zaragoza 0
Atletico Madrid 0 Att: 32,000

Saturday, April 2
Real Sociedad 2 (Uranga 40, Karpin 45)
Osasuna 0 Att: 24,220

Villarreal 3 (Jose Mari 11, 32, Forlan 55)
Athletic Bilbao 1 (Ezquerro 21) Att: 17,000

Zaragoza 2 (Generelo 44, Albelda og 49)
Valencia 2 (Corradi 81, Caneira 87) Att: 31,000

Sunday, April 3
Albacete 1 (Redondo 9)
Real Madrid 2 (Ivan Helguera 15, Owen 45) Att: 13,000

Atletico Madrid 4 (Colsa 27, Fernando Torres pen 60, Salva 86, 88)
Mallorca 0 Att: 45,000

Barcelona 3 (Eto'o pen 16, pen 83, Van Bronckhorst 90)
Betis 3 (Joaquin 12, 63, Ricardo Oliveira 40) Att: 86,352

Levante 0
Deportivo La Coruna 1 (Diego Tristan 41) Att: 17,969

Malaga 1 (Baiano 13)
Getafe 1 (Nano 32) Att: 22,000

Racing Santander 1 (Benayoun 35)
Espanyol 3 (Tamudo pen 13, Jarque 43, Maxi Rodriguez 48) Att: 14,015

Sevilla 1 (Adriano 69)
Numancia 0 Att: 40,000

SPAIN

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Barcelona	30	21	6	3	57	21	69
Real Madrid	30	19	3	8	51	26	60
Villarreal	29	14	8	7	51	27	50
Betis	30	13	10	7	50	40	49
Espanyol	30	14	7	9	40	36	49
Sevilla	30	14	7	9	34	33	49
Valencia	30	12	11	7	46	32	47
Atletico Madrid	30	13	7	10	36	25	46
Dep La Coruna	30	11	12	7	39	36	45
Athletic Bilbao	30	11	8	11	47	42	41
Zaragoza	30	11	7	12	35	42	40
Real Sociedad	30	11	6	13	40	42	39
Getafe	30	9	9	12	31	36	36
Malaga	30	10	5	15	28	38	35
Levante	30	9	7	14	34	44	34
R Santander	30	9	7	14	33	45	34
Osasuna	29	8	7	14	35	53	31
Albacete	30	5	9	16	27	44	24
Mallorca	30	6	6	18	28	53	24
Numancia	30	4	8	18	21	48	20

LEADING GOALSCORERS
20 Samuel Eto'o (Barcelona)
18 Diego Forlan (Villarreal)
16 Fernando Torres (Atletico Madrid)
16 Ricardo Oliveira (Betis)

SWITZERLAND

Mar 12: Grasshopper 1 Neuchatel Xamax 1.
Mar 13: Zurich 0 Young Boys 5; Thun 3 Basle 0; Schaffhausen 0 St Gallen 0.
Mar 16: Young Boys 1 Neuchatel Xamax 0; St Gallen 0 Aarau 0; Basle 4 Schaffhausen 3; Grasshoper 1 Thun 0.
Mar 20: Young Boys 2 St Gallen 3; Zurich 2 Basle 2; Aarau 2 Grasshopper 3; Schaffhausen 0 Thun 1.
Apr 2: Basle 4 Aarau 2; Grasshopper 3 Schaffhausen 1.
Apr 3: Thun 2 Neuchatel 1; St Gallen 4 Zurich 5.
Apr 6: Aarau 2 Zurich 3; Grasshopper 4 St Gallen 0; Schaffhausen 0 Young Boys 1.

SWITZERLAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Basle	24	13	6	5	51	34	45
Thun	22	11	4	7	32	20	37
Zurich	24	10	6	8	38	38	36
Grasshopper	25	9	9	7	30	35	36
Young Boys	23	9	7	7	41	33	34
Neuchatel X	23	9	6	8	30	27	33
St Gallen	24	6	9	9	33	41	27
Aarau	23	6	6	11	33	38	24
Schaffhausen	24	3	8	13	25	43	17

TURKEY

Mar 12: Ankaragucu 1 Denizlispor 1; Konyaspor 2 Malatyaspor 0; Trabzonspor 4 Sakaryaspor 3; Istanbulspor 0 Galatasaray 3.
Mar 13: Diyarbakirspor 3 Gaziantepspor 0; Rizespor 2 Sebatspor 1; Samsunspor 3 Kayserispor 3; Ankaraspor 2 Besiktas 4; Fenerbahce 3 Genclerbirligi 2.
Mar 18: Denizlispor 2 Fenerbahce 0.
Mar 19: Besiktas 1 Trabzonspor 0; Malatyaspor 0 Rizespor 1; Gaziantepspor 2 Ankaragucu 0; Kayserispor 0 Istanbulspor 0.
Mar 20: Galatasaray 4 Ankaraspor 2; Genclerbirligi 2 Konyaspor 1; Sebatspor 3 Samsunspor 0; Sakaryaspor 3 Diyarbakirspor 2.
Apr 2: Fenerbahce 2 Gaziantepspor 0; Rizespor 1 Genclerbirligi 1; Ankaragucu 2 Sakaryaspor 7; Istanbulspor 1 Sebatspor 0.
Apr 3: Trabzonspor 2 Ankaraspor 2; Diyarbakirspor 0 Besiktas 0; Samsunspor 0 Malatyaspor 1; Kayserispor 2 Galatasaray 2; Konyaspor 0 Denizlispor 0.

TURKEY

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Fenerbahce	26	21	2	3	65	14	65
Galatasaray	26	19	4	3	52	18	61
Trabzonspor	26	17	5	4	52	23	56
Besiktas	26	14	7	5	51	29	49
Rizespor	26	11	8	7	31	23	41
Denizlispor	26	11	7	8	34	29	40
Konyaspor	26	8	11	7	48	47	35
Gaziantepspor	26	10	4	12	36	41	34
Malatyaspor	26	10	4	12	30	36	34
Genclerbirligi	26	9	6	11	34	34	33
Ankaraspor	26	8	7	11	37	41	31
Diyarbakirspor	26	8	6	12	27	39	30
Samsunspor	26	8	5	13	32	47	29
Ankaragucu	26	7	7	12	24	44	28
Sakaryaspor	26	7	4	15	40	57	25
Istanbulspor	26	4	10	12	22	39	22
Kayserispor	26	5	6	15	35	60	21
Sebatspor	26	2	7	17	29	58	13

UKRAINE

Mar 13: Tavriya 4 Vorskla 0; Volyn 3 Kryvbas 1; Illichivets 1 Metalist 1; Chornomorets 1 Arsenal 0; Metalurh D 1 Borysfen 3; Dynamo 3 Obolon 1.
Mar 19: Obolon 1 Illichivets 2.
Mar 20: Metalist 1 Volyn 0; Metalurh Z 0 Chornomorets 2; Vorskla 1 Metalurh D 1; Kryvbas 1 Zakarpattya 0; Borysfen 1 Dnipro 1; Arsenal 0 Dynamo 0; Shakhtar 1 Tavriya 0.
Apr 3: Zakarpattya 0 Metalist 0; Tavriya 0 Metalurh D 0; Volyn 1 Obolon 0; Illichivets 0 Arsenal 0; Chornomorets 0 Borysfen 1; Dnipro 3 Vorskla 1; Shakhtar 4 Kryvbas 2; Dynamo 1 Metalurh Z 2.

UKRAINE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Shakhtar	19	17	0	2	40	11	51
Dynamo	20	15	3	2	41	10	48
Metalurh D	20	11	4	5	27	21	37
Volyn	20	10	4	6	27	22	34
Chornomorets	20	10	3	7	21	15	33
Dnipro	19	9	6	4	27	21	33
Illichivets	20	6	8	6	27	25	26
Metalist	20	7	4	9	20	26	25
Tavriya	20	6	5	9	17	19	23
Arsenal	20	5	7	8	18	24	22
Kryvbas	20	5	7	8	16	24	22
Metalurh Z	19	4	8	7	14	21	20
Vorskla	20	5	4	11	10	25	19
Borysfen	20	2	8	10	12	22	14
Zakarpattya	19	2	7	10	11	22	13
Obolon	20	2	6	12	11	31	12

SOUTH AMERICA

LIBERTADORES CUP

Group 1

Mar 17 - Medellin
Independiente Medellin (Col) 4 (Montoya 9, Alvarez 14, 24, Serna 82)
Libertad (Par) 2 (Blanco 7, 21)
HT: 3-2. **Ref:** Brazenas (Arg)
Sent off: Vera (Libertad) 73min

GROUP 1

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
America (Col)	3	3	0	0	6	2	9
Indep Medellin	4	1	1	2	8	8	4
Para'nse (Bra)	3	1	1	1	4	5	4
Libertad	4	1	0	3	6	9	3

Apr 14: Atletico Paranaense v America.
Apr 20: Libertad v Atletico Paranaense.
Apr 26: Independiente Medellin v America.
May 10: Atletico Paranaense v Independiente Medellin; America v Libertad.

Group 2

Mar 15 - Montevideo
Danubio (Uru) 2 (Pouso 41, Silva 45)
Bolivar (Bol) 0
HT: 2-0. **Ref:** Garay (Per)

Mar 17 - Quito
LDU Quito (Ecu) 2 (Graziani 8, Salas 14)
Santos (Bra) 1 (Ricardinho 26)
HT: 2-1. **Ref:** Amarilla (Par)

Apr 6 - Santos
Santos 3 (Robinho 21, 61, Ricardinho 48)
LDU Quito 1 (Urrutia 3)
HT: 1-1. **Ref:** Elizondo (Arg)

GROUP 2

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Danubio	3	2	0	1	7	3	6
Santos	4	2	0	2	10	9	6
LDU Quito	4	2	0	2	4	7	6
Bolivar	3	1	0	2	4	6	3

Apr 12: Bolivar v Danubio.
Apr 20: Danubio v Santos.
Apr 27: Bolivar v LDU Quito.
May 11: Santos v Bolivar; LDU Quito v Danubio.

Group 3

Mar 15 - Santiago
Universidad de Chile (Chl) 2 (Rivarola 65, pen 80)
The Strongest (Bol) 1 (Ponce og 9)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Vieira (Uru)
Sent off: Coelho (The Strongest) 83min

Mar 16 - Buenos Aires
Quilmes (Arg) 2 (Osorio 13, Caneo 76)
Sao Paulo (Bra) 2 (Tardelli 48, Grafite 68)
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Ruiz (Col)

GROUP 3

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
U de Chile	3	2	0	1	7	7	6
Sao Paulo	3	1	2	0	9	7	5
Quilmes	3	1	1	1	5	5	4
The Strongest	3	0	1	2	4	6	1

Apr 13: The Strongest v Universidad de Chile; Sao Paulo v Quilmes.
Apr 21: Universidad de Chile v Sao Paulo.
Apr 28: The Strongest v Quilmes.
May 11: Sao Paulo v The Strongest; Quilmes v Universidad de Chile.

Group 4

Mar 16 - Sao Paulo
Palmeiras (Bra) 1 (Pedrinho 77)
Santo Andre (Bra) 1 (Rafinha 82)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Oliveira (Bra)

Apr 7 - Asuncion
Cerro Porteno (Par) 3 (S Salcedo 43, 55, 65)
Deportivo Tachira (Ven) 1 (G Perez 79)
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Tardelli (Bra)

GROUP 4

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Palmeiras	3	1	2	0	5	2	5
Cerro Porteno	3	1	2	0	6	4	5
Dep Tachira	3	1	0	2	2	6	3
Santo Andre	3	0	2	1	3	4	2

Apr 19: Santo Andre v Palmeiras; Deportivo Tachira v Cerro Porteno.
Apr 28: Cerro Porteno v Santo Andre.
May 4: Deportivo Tachira v Palmeiras.
May 12: Santo Andre v Deportivo Tachira; Palmeiras v Cerro Porteno.

Group 5

Mar 16 - Montevideo
Nacional (Uru) 1 (Abreu pen 73)
Olmedo (Ecu) 2 (Rodriguez 62, Brito 79)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Lecca (Per)

Mar 17 - Barranquilla
Atletico Junior (Col) 0
River Plate (Arg) 2 (Farias pen 90, Sambueza 90)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Chandia (Chl)
Sent off: Palacios 90min, Acuna 90min (both Atletico Junior)

Apr 7 - Buenos Aires
River Plate 2 (Farias 44, Gallardo pen 59)
Atletico Junior 1 (Arzuaga 45)
HT: 1-1. **Ref:** Selman (Chl)

Apr 7 - Riobamba
Olmedo 2 (Gonzalez 7, Rodriguez 80)
Nacional 3 (Moreno og 28, Vazquez 64, Castro 84)
HT: 1-1. **Ref:** Paniagua (Bol)
Sent off: Coelho (Nacional) 87min

GROUP 5

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
River Plate	4	4	0	0	8	3	12
At Junior	4	2	0	2	4	4	6
Nacional	4	1	0	3	4	6	3
Olmedo	4	1	0	3	6	9	3

Apr 19: Olmedo v Atletico Junior.
Apr 21: Nacional v River Plate.
May 3: River Plate v Olmedo; Atletico Junior v Nacional.

Group 6

Mar 15 - Monterrey
Tigres (Mex) 2 (Gaitan pen 31, Peralta 62)
Banfield (Arg) 2 (Barijho 12, Bilos 74)
HT: 1-1. **Ref:** Souza (Bra)

Apr 5 - Caracas
Caracas (Ven) 2 (Garcia 26, Carpintero 63)
Alianza Lima (Per) 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Vasco (Ecu)

Apr 6 - Buenos Aires
Banfield 0
Tigres 3 (Morales 13, Silvera 62, Peralta 66)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Vazquez (Uru)
Sent off: Cervera 25min, Tavio 59min (both Banfield)

GROUP 6

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Tigres	4	2	2	0	8	3	8
Banfield	4	1	2	1	6	8	5
Caracas	4	1	1	2	5	6	4
Alianza Lima	4	1	1	2	4	6	4

Apr 12: Alianza Lima v Banfield.
Apr 13: Caracas v Tigres.
May 3: Banfield v Caracas; Tigres v Alianza Lima.

Group 7

Mar 22 - Calama
Cobreloa (Chl) 2 (Fuentes 85, Diaz 90)
Once Caldas (Col) 1 (Alvarez 49)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Ortube (Bol)
Sent off: Fabbro (Once Caldas) 90min

Mar 23 - Guadalajara
Guadalajara (Mex) 2 (Morales pen 50, pen 61)
San Lorenzo (Arg) 1 (Garcia pen 67)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Rezende (Bra)
Sent off: Ramirez (Guadalajara) 68min; Coudet 69min, Garcia 80min (both San Lorenzo)

Apr 5 - Buenos Aires
San Lorenzo 0
Guadalajara 0
Ref: Grance (Par)

Apr 5 - Manizales
Once Caldas 0
Cobreloa 0
Ref: Brand (Ven)

GROUP 7

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Guadalajara	4	2	2	0	5	2	8
Cobreloa	4	1	2	1	3	4	5
Once Caldas	4	0	3	1	1	2	3
San Lorenzo	4	0	3	1	1	2	3

Apr 12: Once Caldas v Guadalajara.
Apr 26: Cobreloa v San Lorenzo.
May 5: San Lorenzo v Once Caldas; Guadalajara v Cobreloa.

Group 8

Mar 16 - Pachuca
Pachuca (Mex) 3 (Cacho 37, Cascini og 52, Rodriguez 90)
Boca Juniors (Arg) 1 (Barros Schelotto 56)
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Rezende (Bra)
Sent off: Traverso (Boca) 87min

Apr 6 - Buenos Aires
Boca Juniors 4 (Cagna 29, Guglielminpietro 33, Palacio 76, Baiano 89)
Pachuca 0
HT: 2-0. **Ref:** Amarilla (Par)

GROUP 8

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Boca Juniors	4	2	1	1	8	3	7
Sp Cristal (Per)	3	2	0	1	3	3	6
Pachuca	4	2	0	2	5	8	6
Cuenca (Ecu)	3	0	1	2	1	3	1

Apr 14: Deportivo Cuenca v Sporting Cristal.
Apr 27: Sporting Cristal v Boca Juniors; Deportivo Cuenca v Pachuca.
May 4: Pachuca v Sporting Cristal; Boca Juniors v Deportivo Cuenca.

Top two from each group qualify for knockout stages

ARGENTINA

CLOSING CHAMPIONSHIP

Friday, March 11
Argentinos Juniors 1 (Carrario 72)
Arsenal 1 (Denis 89)

Saturday, March 12
Banfield 0
Newell's Old Boys 1 (Belluschi 17)

Independiente 1 (Carrizo 29)
Olimpo 1 (Mello 67)

Velez Sarsfield 2 (Gracian 2, Zarate 36)
San Lorenzo 0

Sunday, March 13
Colon Santa Fe 2 (Hernandez 3, Fuertes 6)
Quilmes 1 (Bastianini 81)

Gimnasia LP 0
Boca Juniors 1 (Cagna 38)

Huracan 1 (Caggiano 73)
Almagro 1 (Duarte 89)

Instituto 0
Estudiantes 3 (Pavone 39, 71, Krupoviesa 87)

River Plate 1 (Gonzalez 47)
Racing Club 0

Rosario Central 3 (Papa 2, Ruben 56, Ferrari pen 65)
Lanus 3 (Graf 20, 54, 72)

Friday, March 18
San Lorenzo 1 (Michelini 56)
Rosario Central 3 (Vitti 18, 84, Monges 76)

Saturday, March 19
Newell's Old Boys 1 (Spolli 74)
Argentinos Juniors 1 (Marini 62)

Racing Club 2 (Guerrero 35, 57)
Gimnasia LP 1 (Enria 67)

Sunday, March 20
Almagro 0
Colon Santa Fe 5 (Capurro 16, Cominges 30, 48, Vargas 69, Fuertes 71)

Arsenal 2 (Calderon 37, Rios 49)
Instituto 1 (Lujambio 52)

Boca Juniors 2 (Schiavi 37, Guglielminpietro 56)
Independiente 1 (Mustafa 84)

Estudiantes 2 (Pavone 48, 66)
River Plate 1 (Gonzalez 17)

Lanus 3 (Obolo 10, Graf 63, 70)
Huracan 1 (Caggiano 53)

Olimpo 1 (Delorte 40)
Velez Sarsfield 1 (Zarate 37)

Quilmes 1 (Alayes 53)
Banfield 0

Tuesday, March 22
Banfield 1 (Andrizzi 89)
Instituto 0
Last 12 minutes of game abandoned on Feb 11

Friday, April 1
Huracan 2 (Caggiano pen 44, Vannieuwenhoven 69)
San Lorenzo 2 (Moreno 9, Garcia pen 13)

Saturday, April 2
Argentinos Juniors 0
Quilmes 1 (Saavedra 45)

Independiente 2 (Frutos 52, Aguero 58)
Gimnasia LP 0

Sunday, April 3
Banfield 4 (Cvitanich 33, Ceballos 44, San Martin 75, Barrionuevo 81)
Almagro 1 (Nieto 57)

Colon Santa Fe 4 (Gioda og 48, Moreno y Fabianesi 55, Fuertes 72, Gandin 90)
Lanus 0

Estudiantes 2 (Maggiolo 7, Pavone 45)
Racing Club 2 (Guerrero 26, Romero 35)

Instituto 4 (Raymonda 31, Lujambio 32, Jimenez 44, Cobo 75)
Newell's Old Boys 3 (Vella 21, Spolli 37, Capria 64)

River Plate 2 (Dominguez 34, Gallardo 38)
Arsenal 0

Rosario Central 1 (Ledesma 90)
Olimpo 0

Velez Sarsfield 2 (Cubero 60, Castroman 90)
Boca Juniors 0

ARGENTINA – CLOSING

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Rosario Central	7	5	2	0	14	6	17
River Plate	7	5	1	1	14	8	16
Estudiantes	7	4	2	1	12	7	14
Quilmes	7	4	1	2	8	3	13
Racing Club	7	4	1	2	8	5	13
Velez Sarsfield	7	3	3	1	7	4	12
Lanus	7	3	2	2	13	12	11
Arsenal	7	3	2	2	9	8	11
Colon Santa Fe	7	3	1	3	15	10	10
Newell's OB	7	2	4	1	8	6	10
Boca Juniors	7	3	1	3	8	10	10
Independiente	7	2	3	2	10	8	9
Argentinos Jnrs	7	2	3	2	11	10	9
Olimpo	7	2	2	3	7	8	8
Banfield	7	2	1	4	6	6	7
Gimnasia LP	7	2	0	5	6	11	6
Instituto	7	2	0	5	9	15	6
San Lorenzo	7	1	1	5	9	17	4
Huracan	7	0	3	4	5	13	3
Almagro	7	0	3	4	6	18	3

LEADING GOALSCORERS
8 Mariano Pavone (Estudiantes)
6 Claudio Graf (Lanus)
5 Pablo Vitti (Rosario Central)

BOLIVIA

TRANSITIONAL TOURNAMENT

Mar 5: La Paz 3 Blooming 1.
Mar 6: Aurora 4 Union Central 0; The Strongest 1 San Jose 1; Destroyers 1 Bolivar 1.
Mar 9: Oriente 2 Iberoamericana 0.
Mar 13: Iberoamericana 3 Destroyers 1; Bolivar 1 Jorge Wilstermann 0; Aurora 1 Real Potosi 1; San Jose 6 La Paz 3.
Mar 14: Blooming 2 Oriente 1.
Mar 17: Union Central 0 The Strongest 2.
Mar 19: The Strongest 0 Aurora 1.
Mar 20: Real Potosi 0 Bolivar 4; Jorge Wilstermann 3 Iberoamericana 0; La Paz 2 Union Central 0; Oriente Petrolero 1 San Jose 1; Destroyers 1 Blooming 4.
Apr 2: San Jose 7 Destroyers 2.
Apr 3: Iberoamericana 1 Bolivar 4; The Strongest 4 Real Potosi 0; Aurora 0 La Paz 0; Union Central 0 Oriente 1; Blooming 0 Jorge Wilstermann 0.
Apr 5: Destroyers 3 Union Central 1.
Apr 6: Jorge Wilstermann 3 San Jose 1; Real Potosi 1 Iberoamericana 1; La Paz 2 The Strongest 1; Oriente 3 Aurora 3.
Apr 7: Bolivar 5 Blooming 0.

BOLIVIA – TRANSITIONAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Bolivar	5	4	1	0	15	2	13
La Paz	5	3	1	1	10	8	10
Aurora	5	2	3	0	9	4	9
San Jose	5	2	2	1	16	10	8
Oriente	5	2	2	1	8	6	8
J Wilstermann	4	2	1	1	6	2	7
The Strongest	5	2	1	2	8	4	7
Blooming	5	2	1	2	7	10	7
Iberoamericana	5	1	1	3	5	11	4
Destroyers	5	1	1	3	8	16	4
Real Potosi	4	0	2	2	2	10	2
Union Central	5	0	0	5	1	12	0

CHILE

OPENING CHAMPIONSHIP

Mar 11: Rangers 1 U de Concepcion 1.
Mar 12: Huachipato 1 U de Chile 0; Dep La Serena 0 U Catolica 1; Audax Italiano 1 Dep Temuco 2; Union Espanola 4 Coquimbo Unido 2; San Felipe 0 Everton 2.
Mar 13: Colo Colo 2 Cobreloa 0; Santiago Wanderers 3 Dep Melipilla 0; Dep Concepcion 1 Puerto Montt 1; Palestino 0 Cobresal 0.
Mar 18: Cobreloa 2 Dep Concepcion 1; Everton 1 Huachipato 3.
Mar 19: U Catolica 1 Colo Colo 0; Cobresal 0 Dep La Serena 1; Coquimbo Unido 1 San Felipe 0.
Mar 20: U de Chile 3 Audax Italiano 1; U de Concepcion 0 Union Espanola 0; Puerto Montt 3 Santiago Wanderers 1; Dep Temuco 1 Rangers 1; Dep Melipilla 1 Palestino 3.
Apr 2: Colo Colo 2 Coquimbo Unido 0; Audax Italiano 3 Cobreloa 0; Palestino 0 U Catolica 1; Dep La Serena 2 Santiago Wanderers 3; Everton 3 Dep Temuco 0; San Felipe 1 Cobresal 2.
Apr 3: Huachipato 1 Puerto Montt 4; Rangers 1 Dep Concepcion 1; U de Concepcion 1 Dep Melipilla 2; Union Espanola 0 U de Chile 2.

CHILE – OPENING – GROUP A

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Colo Colo	11	6	3	2	21	11	21
Huachipato	11	6	1	4	20	19	19
Dep Melipilla	11	2	3	6	6	17	9
San Felipe	11	2	1	8	6	16	7
Audax Italiano	11	1	3	7	11	20	6

GROUP B

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Coq'bo Unido	11	6	0	5	14	14	18
Dep La Serena	11	5	2	4	19	19	17
Cobreloa	10	5	2	3	16	17	17
Puerto Montt	11	4	1	6	15	15	13
S Wanderers	11	3	1	7	16	22	10

GROUP C

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
U Concepcion	11	4	3	4	12	10	15
Dep Concepcion	10	3	5	2	10	10	14
Dep Temuco	11	3	3	5	14	18	12
Union Espanola	10	2	5	3	16	17	11
Palestino	11	3	1	7	11	18	10

GROUP D

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
U Catolica	11	9	1	1	20	5	28
U de Chile	10	7	1	2	19	7	22
Cobresal	11	6	3	2	19	11	21
Rangers	11	3	6	2	11	10	15
Everton	11	4	3	4	18	18	15

COLOMBIA

OPENING CHAMPIONSHIP

Mar 12: Dep Cali 1 Indep Santa Fe 1.
Mar 13: At Nacional 1 Tolima 3; Magdalena 1 Once Caldas 1; Bucaramanga 2 Dep Pasto 0; Envigado 3 Quindio 0; Chico 1 Real Cartagena 2; At Huila 3 America 0; Millonarios 0 At Junior 0; Pereira 3 Indep Medellin 0.
Mar 16: Tolima 0 Indep Medellin 0; America 1 Millonarios 1; Real Cartagena 1 At Huila 1; Quindio 1 Chico 0; Dep Pasto 2 Envigado 1; Indep Santa Fe 0 Bucaramanga 0; Once Caldas 1 Dep Cali 1; At Nacional 2 Magdalena 0.
Mar 19: Millonarios 0 Indep Santa Fe 3.
Mar 20: Pereira 2 Once Caldas 2; Indep Medellin 0 At Nacional 4; At Junior 0 Magdalena 1; Dep Cali 2 America 0; Real Cartagena 1 Bucaramanga 0; Quindio 1 Envigado 4; Dep Pasto 1 Chico 0; Tolima 1 At Huila 2.
Mar 23: America 2 Magdalena 1.
Mar 27: Indep Medellin 1 Chico 0.
Mar 31: Tolima 1 At Junior 1.
Apr 2: Dep Cali 3 At Nacional 3; Envigado 2 Indep Santa Fe 1.
Apr 3: Magdalena 0 Tolima 0; Bucaramanga 1 Once Caldas 1; Chico 3 Dep Pasto 4; At Huila 2 Quindio 0; Millonarios 2 Real Cartagena 1; Pereira 1 America 2; Indep Medellin 1 At Junior 0.
Apr 6: America 3 Indep Medellin 2; Real Cartagena 1 Pereira 1; Quindio 3 Millonarios 3; Dep Pasto 3 At Huila 1; Indep Santa Fe 1 Chico 0; Once Caldas 2 Envigado 2; At Nacional 3 Bucaramanga 2; Magdalena 2 Dep Cali 0.

COLOMBIA – OPENING

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
At Nacional	11	7	3	1	25	13	24
Envigado	11	5	4	2	24	15	19
Tolima	11	5	4	2	24	15	19
Dep Pasto	10	5	3	2	14	12	18
Indep Santa Fe	11	4	5	2	12	8	17
At Huila	11	4	4	3	11	8	16
Magdalena	11	4	3	4	8	8	15
Real Cartagena	11	4	2	5	9	11	14
Indep Medellin	11	4	2	5	10	16	14
Dep Cali	10	3	4	3	14	12	13
At Junior	9	3	3	3	10	9	12
America	10	3	3	4	12	16	12
Millonarios	11	2	6	3	17	22	12
Once Caldas	10	2	5	3	11	12	11
Bucaramanga	11	3	2	6	9	12	11
Pereira	10	2	4	4	12	13	10
Quindio	11	3	1	7	10	23	10
Chico	10	2	2	6	10	14	8

ECUADOR

OPENING CHAMPIONSHIP

Mar 12: LDU Quito 4 Barcelona 0; El Nacional 4 LDU Loja 1; Dep Cuenca 2 Olmedo 0.
Mar 13: Dep Quevedo 1 Aucas 3; Emelec 2 Dep Quito 0.
Mar 20: Dep Quito 3 Dep Quevedo 0; Aucas 1 Dep Cuenca 0; Olmedo 2 El Nacional 4; Emelec 1 Barcelona 2.
Mar 21: LDU Loja 1 LDU Quito 1.
Apr 3: LDU Quito 6 Olmedo 3; El Nacional 2 Aucas 0; Dep Cuenca 0 Dep Quito 4; Dep Quevedo 3 Emelec 1; Barcelona 2 LDU Loja 1.

ECUADOR – OPENING

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
El Nacional	7	4	3	0	17	7	15
LDU Quito	7	4	2	1	20	12	14
Aucas	7	4	1	2	9	7	13
Dep Quito	7	4	0	3	14	6	12
Barcelona	7	3	3	1	10	10	12
LDU Loja	7	2	2	3	13	17	8
Dep Quevedo	7	1	3	3	10	14	6
Emelec	7	1	2	4	7	11	5
Olmedo	7	1	2	4	8	15	5
Dep Cuenca	7	1	2	4	6	15	5

PARAGUAY

OPENING CHAMPIONSHIP

Mar 12: Olimpia 1 General Caballero 1.
Mar 13: 12 de Octubre 0 3 de Febrero 0; Guarani 1 Tacuary 3; Sportivo Luqueno 1 Libertad 1.
Mar 14: Nacional 0 Cerro Porteno 2.
Mar 18: Tacuary 0 12 de Octubre 1.
Mar 19: 3 de Febrero 0 Cerro Porteno 1.
Mar 20: Olimpia 1 Nacional 0; General Caballero 1 Sportivo Luqueno 1.
Apr 1: Nacional 2 3 de Febrero 4.
Apr 2: Cerro Porteno 1 Tacuary 1; 12 de Octubre 1 Libertad 2; Guarani 1 General Caballero 0.
Apr 3: Sportivo Luqueno 1 Olimpia 2.
Apr 6: Libertad 2 Guarani 2; Olimpia 0 Tacuary 0.

PARAGUAY – OPENING

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Cerro Porteno	7	5	2	0	13	4	17
Libertad	7	3	2	2	9	10	11
Tacuary	7	2	4	1	11	6	10
Olimpia	7	2	4	1	5	6	10
3 de Febrero	7	2	3	2	8	6	9
Nacional	7	3	0	4	7	9	9
12 de Octubre	7	2	2	3	6	9	8
Sp Luqueno	7	1	4	2	8	9	7
Gen Caballero	7	1	4	2	5	6	7
Guarani	7	1	1	5	7	14	4

PERU

OPENING CHAMPIONSHIP

Mar 11: Universitario 1 Universidad CV 0.
Mar 13: Cienciano 2 Coronel Bolognesi 1; Union Huaral 2 At Universidad 3; Melgar 3 Sport Ancash 2; Sporting Cristal 1 Alianza Lima 1; Alianza Atletico 0 Universidad SMP 2.
Mar 16: Sport Ancash 0 Sporting Cristal 1; Sport Boys 2 Melgar 1; Coronel Bolognesi 0 Union Huaral 2; Universidad CV 0 Cienciano 1; Universidad SMP 1 Universitario 3; Alianza Lima 5 Alianza Atletico 0.
Mar 19: At Universidad 1 Coronel Bolognesi 0.
Mar 20: Cienciano 1 Universidad SMP 0; Union Huaral 2 Universidad CV 2; Sporting Cristal 4 Sport Boys 1; Alianza Atletico 1 Sport Ancash 1; Universitario 2 Alianza Lima 2.
Apr 1: Alianza Lima 6 Cienciano 2.
Apr 2: Sport Boys 2 Alianza Atletico 2; Universidad SMP 0 Union Huaral 1.
Apr 3: Sport Ancash 0 Universitario 0; Melgar 1 Sporting Cristal 1; Universidad CV 3 At Universidad 2.

PERU – OPENING

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Sporting Cristal	5	3	2	0	9	4	11
Cienciano	5	3	1	1	7	8	10
Universitario	5	2	3	0	6	3	9
Alianza Lima	5	2	2	1	14	6	8
Union Huaral	4	2	1	1	7	5	7
At Universidad	4	2	1	1	7	6	7
Melgar	4	2	1	1	6	5	7
Univ CV	5	1	2	2	8	9	5
Sport Ancash	5	1	2	2	4	5	5
Sport Boys	4	1	1	2	5	8	4
Univ SMP	5	1	0	4	4	7	3
Alianza Atletico	5	0	3	2	6	13	3
C Bolognesi	4	0	1	3	1	5	1

URUGUAY

TRANSITIONAL TOURNAMENT

Mar 12: Liverpool 1 Rocha 2; Danubio 0 Tacuarembo 1; Dep Colonia 0 Penarol 3.
Mar 13: Nacional 2 River Plate 0; Cerro 1 Wanderers 2; Cerrito 2 Paysandu 1; Defensor 3 Rampla Juniors 1; Plaza 0 Fenix 0; Rentistas 2 Miramar Misiones 2.
Mar 19: Plaza 1 Nacional 4; Rocha 1 Rentistas 1; Wanderers 2 Tacuarembo 0.
Mar 20: Liverpool 1 Rampla Juniors 0; River Plate 2 Cerrito 1; Cerro 2 Fenix 3; Danubio 5 Miramar Misiones 2; Penarol 1 Defensor 1; Dep Colonia 1 Paysandu 1.
Apr 2: Tacuarembo 2 Plaza 1; Cerrito 2 Fenix 0; Penarol 2 Rentistas 2.
Apr 3: Danubio 1 Nacional 1; Wanderers 2 Liverpool 4; River Plate 0 Rocha 1; Rampla Juniors 2 Cerro 1; Defensor 2 Dep Colonia 0; Miramar Misiones 4 Paysandu 1.

URUGUAY – TRANSITIONAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Nacional	4	3	1	0	10	3	10
Defensor	4	3	1	0	10	4	10
Liverpool	4	3	0	1	9	4	9
Rocha	4	2	2	0	7	5	8
Danubio	4	2	1	1	8	5	7
Cerrito	4	2	1	1	7	5	7
Fenix	4	2	1	1	5	4	7
Tacuarembo	4	2	1	1	5	5	7
Penarol	4	1	3	0	8	5	6
Wanderers	4	2	0	2	6	7	6
M Misiones	4	1	1	2	8	10	4
Dep Colonia	4	1	1	2	3	6	4
Rentistas	4	0	3	1	6	7	3
Rampla Jnrs	4	1	0	3	4	8	3
River Plate	4	1	0	3	4	8	3
Paysandu	4	0	2	2	6	10	2
Cerro	4	0	1	3	6	9	1
Plaza	4	0	1	3	2	9	1

VENEZUELA

CLOSING CHAMPIONSHIP

Mar 19: Ital-Chacao 1 ItalMaracaibo 1.
Mar 20: Trujillanos 2 Caracas 4; Estudiantes 0 Monagas 2; Mineros Guayana 0 Dep Tachira 1; UA Maracaibo 3 Carabobo 2.
Mar 27: ItalMaracaibo 0 Trujillanos 0.
Mar 31: Dep Tachira 1 Estudiantes 1.
Apr 2: Caracas 0 UA Maracaibo 1.
Apr 3: Carabobo 0 Mineros Guayana 1; Monagas 2 Ital-Chacao 1.
Apr 6: Monagas 3 Mineros Guayana 2.

VENEZUELA – CLOSING

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
UA Maracaibo	10	8	2	0	17	6	26
Dep Tachira	11	7	2	2	18	10	23
Caracas	11	6	4	1	19	6	22
Mineros G'ana	12	4	4	4	17	18	16
Monagas	11	4	2	5	18	23	14
ItalMaracaibo	11	3	4	4	14	17	13
Carabobo	11	2	5	4	12	14	11
Ital-Chacao	11	2	4	5	14	15	10
Estudiantes	11	1	6	4	10	16	9
Trujillanos	11	0	3	8	10	24	3

CENTRAL & NORTH AMERICA

CONCACAF CHAMPIONS CUP

Quarter-finals, 2nd legs

Mar 16: Harbour View (Jam) 1 DC United (USA) 2 *DC United 4-2 on agg*; Municipal (Gtm) 0 Monterrey (Mex) 0 *Monterrey 2-1 on agg*; Pumas UNAM (Mex) 2 Olimpia (Hnd) 1 *Pumas 3-2 on agg*.
Mar 17: Saprissa (CR) 2 Kansas City Wizards (USA) 1 *Saprissa 2-1 on agg*.

Semi-finals, 1st legs

Apr 6: DC United 1 Pumas UNAM 1.
Apr 7: Saprissa 2 Monterrey 2.

MEXICO

CLOSING CHAMPIONSHIP

Mar 12: Jaguares 1 Monterrey 1; Cruz Azul 4 Pachuca 0; Dorados 2 Pumas UNAM 1; Tigres 6 Toluca 0; Atlas 2 Atlante 2.
Mar 13: America 3 Guadalajara 3; Puebla 0 Necaxa 1; Tecos UAG 1 Veracruz 1; Santos 3 Morelia 1.
Mar 19: Toluca 0 Cruz Azul 2; Monterrey 2 Tecos UAG 1; Veracruz 2 Tigres 0; Guadalajara 5 Santos 1; Morelia 3 Puebla 1; Necaxa 2 Jaguares 0.
Mar 20: Pumas UNAM 2 America 3; Atlante 1 Dorados 1; Pachuca 3 Atlas 1.
Apr 2: Puebla 4 Guadalajara 1; Tecos UAG 2 Tigres 0; Jaguares 0 Morelia 2; Cruz Azul 3 Veracruz 0; Monterrey 1 Necaxa 1; Dorados 3 Pachuca 1; Atlas 0 Toluca 0.
Apr 6: America 1 Atlante 1.

MEXICO – CLOSING – GROUP 1

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Morelia	11	7	2	2	17	9	23
Tecos UAG	11	6	3	2	22	13	21
America	11	5	5	1	26	19	20
Atlante	11	3	5	3	15	13	14
Dorados	11	3	4	4	14	14	13
Pumas UNAM	10	3	1	6	14	16	10

GROUP 2

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Cruz Azul	11	8	2	1	26	8	26
Toluca	11	4	3	4	10	17	15
Guadalajara	11	3	5	3	20	21	14
Tigres	11	3	4	4	16	13	13
Puebla	11	3	2	6	15	21	11
Atlas	11	1	2	8	13	24	5

GROUP 3

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Monterrey	11	5	3	3	18	17	18
Santos	10	6	0	4	21	21	18
Necaxa	11	5	1	5	16	14	16
Pachuca	11	3	3	5	14	17	12
Jaguares	11	2	4	5	9	16	10
Veracruz	11	2	3	6	8	21	9

LEADING GOALSCORERS

9 Kleber Boas (America)
9 Matias Vuoso (Santos)

UNITED STATES

Apr 2: Chivas USA 0 DC United 2; MetroStars 0 Real Salt Lake 0; Columbus Crew 3 Los Angeles Galaxy 0; FC Dallas 2 Chicago Fire 1; Kansas City Wizards 3 Colorado Rapids 2; San Jose Earthquakes 2 New England Revolution 2.

USA – EASTERN CONFERENCE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Columbus	1	1	0	0	3	0	3
DC United	1	1	0	0	2	0	3
Kansas City	1	1	0	0	3	2	3
New England	1	0	1	0	2	2	1
MetroStars	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
Chicago Fire	1	0	0	1	1	2	0

WESTERN CONFERENCE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
FC Dallas	1	1	0	0	2	1	3
San Jose	1	0	1	0	2	2	1
Real Salt Lake	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
Colorado	1	0	0	1	2	3	0
Chivas USA	1	0	0	1	0	2	0
LA Galaxy	1	0	0	1	0	3	0

AFRICA

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

1st rnd, 2nd legs

Mar 18: JS Kabylie (Alg) 0 Fello Star Labe (Gui) 0 *Fello Star Labe 1-0 on agg*; USM Alger (Alg) 5 Al Olympique (Lby) 0 *USM Alger 7-0 on agg*.
Mar 19: Africa Sports (IvC) 3 Racing Bafoussam (Cam) 1 *Africa Sports 3-2 on agg*; Al Ahly (Egy) 6 SC Villa (Uga) 0 *Al Ahly 6-0 on agg*; Etoile Sahel (Tun) 3 AS Douanes (Sen) 1 *Etoile Sahel 3-1 on agg*; Esperance (Tun) 5 Al Hilal (Sud) 1 *Esperance 5-3 on agg*; FAR Rabat (Mor) 2 Asante Kotoko (Gha) 0 *FAR Rabat 2-1 on agg*; Kaizer Chiefs (SAf) 4 USJF Ravinala (Mad) 1 *Kaizer Chiefs 5-1 on agg*; Raja Casablanca (Mor) 2 DC Motema Pembe (DRC) 0 *Raja Casablanca 3-1 on agg*; Red Arrows (Zam) 2 CAPS United (Zim) 1 *Red Arrows 3-2 on agg*.
Mar 20: Ajax Cape Town (SAf) 1 ASFA Yennega (BuF) 0 *Agg 1-1. Ajax Cape Town 5-3 on pens*; ASEC Abidjan (IvC) 1 Sagrada Esperanca (Ang) 0 *ASEC Abidjan 3-2 on agg*; Cotonsport (Cam) 1 AS Aviacao (Ang) 0 *AS Aviacao 2-1 on agg*; Enyimba (Nig) 4 Simba SC (Tan) 0 *Enyimba 5-1 on agg*; Hearts of Oak (Gha) 2 Dolphin (Nig) 1 *Dolphin 5-2 on agg*; Zamalek (Egy) 3 Tusker (Ken) 1 *Zamalek 4-1 on agg*.

AFRICAN CONFEDERATION CUP

1st rnd, 2nd legs

Mar 18: Inter Clube (Ang) 1 FC 105 Libreville (Gab) 3 *FC 105 Libreville 6-2 on agg*; Ismaili (Egy) 2 Ferroviario Maputo (Moz) 0 *Ismaili 3-0 on agg*; JS Kairouan (Tun) 2 Al Ittihad (Lby) 3 *Al Ittihad 6-2 on agg*; Stella (IvC) 3 AS Douanes (Tog) 0 *Stella 3-1 on agg*.
Mar 19: Al Merreikh (Sud) 3 USCA Foot (Mad) 0 *Al Merreikh 4-3 on agg*; APR FC (Rwa) 1 Kampala City Council (Uga) 0 *APR FC 1-0 on agg*; AS Marsa (Tun) 2 COD Meknes (Mor) 0 *AS Marsa 3-0 on agg*; ASC Ndiambour (Sen) 1 King Faisal Babies (Gha) 1 *King Faisal Babies 4-1 on agg*; Bamboutos Mbouda (Cam) 2 ASAC Concorde (Mra) 0 *Bamboutos Mbouda 2-0 on agg*; MC Oran (Alg) 4 OC Khouribga (Mor) 0 *MC Oran 4-2 on agg*; SuperSport United (SAf) 9 Red Star (Sey) 0 *SuperSport United 13-1 on agg*.
Mar 20: Al Mokawloon (Egy) 3 Banks (Eth) 1 *Al Mokawloon 3-1 on agg*; Bendel Insurance (Nig) 3 Cl Kamsar (Gui) 1 *Bendel Insurance 4-2 on agg*; Enugu Rangers (Nig) 3 Sony Ela Nguema (EqG) 1 *Enugu Rangers 4-1 on agg*; Saint-Eloi Lupopo (DRC) 2 BDF (Bot) 0 *Saint-Eloi Lupopo 2-1 on agg*; Union Douala (Cam) 1 CS Cilu (DRC) 0 *Agg 2-2. Union Douala on away goals*.

ASIA

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Group A
Mar 15: Al Shorta (Irq) 1 Paas (Irn) 1.
Mar 16: Al Rayyan (Qat) 2 Al Salmia (Kuw) 1.
Apr 6: Al Rayyan 2 Al Shorta 0; Paas 5 Al Salmia 1.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Paas	3	2	1	0	8	3	7
Al Rayyan	3	2	0	1	5	3	6
Al Salmia	3	1	0	2	5	8	3
Al Shorta	3	0	1	2	2	6	1

Group B
Mar 16: Al Wahda (Syr) 1 Al Shabab (Sau) 2; Sepahan (Irn) 1 Al Ain (UAE) 1.
Apr 6: Al Wahda 1 Sepahan 3; Al Ain 3 Al Shabab 0.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Al Ain	3	2	1	0	7	1	7
Sepahan	3	1	2	0	5	3	5
Al Shabab	3	1	1	1	3	5	4
Al Wahda	3	0	0	3	2	8	0

Group C
Mar 16: Al Kuwait (Kuw) 0 Al Sadd (Qat) 1; Al Ahli (UAE) 3 Neftchi (Uzb) 0.
Apr 6: Al Kuwait 1 Al Ahli 0; Neftchi 2 Al Sadd 0.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Al Sadd	3	2	0	1	3	2	6
Neftchi	3	2	0	1	3	3	6
Al Ahli	3	1	0	2	3	3	3
Al Kuwait	3	1	0	2	1	2	3

Group D
Mar 16: Al Ahli (Sau) 3 Al Jaish (Syr) 1; Pakhtakor (Uzb) 1 Al Zawra'a (Irq) 2.
Apr 5: Al Zawra'a 1 Al Jaish 5.
Apr 6: Al Ahli 3 Pakhtakor 0.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Al Ahli	3	3	0	0	8	2	9
Al Jaish	3	1	0	2	6	6	3
Pakhtakor	3	1	0	2	3	5	3
Al Zawra'a	3	1	0	2	4	8	3

Group E
Mar 16: Jubilo Iwata (Jap) 6 Hoang Anh Gia Lai (Vie) 0; Suwon Bluewings (SKo) 0 Shenzhen Jianlibao (Chn) 0.
Apr 6: Jubilo Iwata 0 Suwon Bluewings 1; Shenzhen Jianlibao 5 Hoang Anh Gia Lai 0.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Shenzhen	3	2	1	0	6	0	7
Suwon	3	2	1	0	6	1	7
Jubilo Iwata	3	1	0	2	6	2	3
Hoang Anh GL	3	0	0	3	1	16	0

Group F
Mar 16: PSM Makassar (Ins) 0 Yokohama F Marinos (Jap) 2; Shandong Luneng (Chn) 1 BEC Tero Sasana (Tha) 0.
Apr 6: PSM Makassar 0 Shandong Luneng 1; BEC Tero Sasana 1 Yokohama F Marinos 2.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Shandong	3	3	0	0	3	0	9
Yokohama FM	3	2	0	1	4	2	6
PSM	3	1	0	2	1	3	3
BEC Tero S'na	3	0	0	3	1	4	0

Group G
Mar 16: Binh Dinh (Vie) 0 Persebaya Surabaya (Ins) 0; Krung Thai Bank (Tha) 0 Busan I'Park (SKo) 2.
Apr 6: Binh Dinh 1 Krung Thai Bank 2; Busan I'Park 4 Persebaya Surabaya 0.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Busan I'Park	3	3	0	0	14	0	9
Krung Thai Bank	3	2	0	1	4	4	6
Persebaya	3	0	1	2	1	6	1
Binh Dinh	3	0	1	2	1	10	1

Group winners qualify for quarter-finals
Bye to quarter-finals: Al Ittihad (Sau; defending champions)

AFC CUP

Group A
Mar 16: Nebitchi (Tkm) 3 East Bengal (Ind) 2; Muktijoddha (Ban) 0 Al Faisaly (Jor) 3.
Apr 6: Nebitchi 0 Muktijoddha 1; Al Faisaly 5 East Bengal 0.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Al Faisaly	3	2	1	0	9	1	7
Nebitchi	3	1	1	1	4	4	4
Muktijoddha	3	1	1	1	1	3	4
East Bengal	3	0	1	2	2	8	1

Group B
Mar 16: Al Hussein (Jor) 4 Al Ahed (Leb) 0.
Apr 6: Dempo (Ind) 0 Al Hussein 3.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Al Hussein	2	2	0	0	7	0	6
Al Ahed	2	1	0	1	1	4	3
Dempo	2	0	0	2	0	4	0

Group C
Mar 16: Al Nijmeh (Leb) 4 Brothers Union (Ban) 1.
Apr 6: Nisa (Tkm) 0 Al Nijmeh 1.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Al Nijmeh	2	2	0	0	5	1	6
Nisa	2	0	1	1	1	2	1
Brothers Union	2	0	1	1	2	5	1

Group D
Mar 16: Valencia (Mdv) 1 Perak (Mly) 1; Tampines Rovers (Sin) 1 Sun Hei (HK) 1.
Apr 6: Tampines Rovers 1 Valencia 0; Perak 0 Sun Hei 1.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Sun Hei	3	2	1	0	8	2	7
Perak	3	1	1	1	3	3	4
Tampines Rvrs	3	1	1	1	3	3	4
Valencia	3	0	1	2	2	8	1

Group E
Mar 16: Happy Valley (HK) 0 Home United (Sin) 1; Pahang (Mly) 1 New Radiant (Mdv) 0.
Apr 6: New Radiant 1 Home United 0; Happy Valley 1 Pahang 1.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
New Radiant	3	2	0	1	3	1	6
Home United	3	2	0	1	3	2	6
Pahang	3	1	1	1	3	3	4
Happy Valley	3	0	1	2	1	4	1

Group winners and the three best runners-up qualify for quarter-finals

JAPAN

Mar 5: Urawa Reds 0 Kashima Antlers 1; Nagoya Grampus Eight 2 JEF United 2; Shimizu S-Pulse 1 Sanfrecce Hiroshima 1; Gamba Osaka 0 Omiya Ardija 2; Yokohama F Marinos 0 Jubilo Iwata 1; Oita Trinita 1 Tokyo Verdy 1969 2; FC Tokyo 4 Albirex Niigata 0.
Mar 6: Vissel Kobe 3 Cerezo Osaka 1; Kashiwa Reysol 1 Kawasaki Frontale 1.
Mar 12: Omiya Ardija 1 Vissel Kobe 1; Tokyo Verdy 1969 0 Shimizu S-Pulse 0; Kashima Antlers 2 Gamba Osaka 2; Kawasaki Frontale 3 Urawa Reds 3; Cerezo Osaka 2 Yokohama F Marinos 3; Sanfrecce Hiroshima 0 FC Tokyo 0; JEF United 2 Kashiwa Reysol 2.
Mar 13: Albirex Niigata 2 Oita Trinita 1; Jubilo Iwata 0 Nagoya Grampus Eight 3.
Apr 2: Yokohama F Marinos 4 Albirex Niigata 1; Kashiwa Reysol 1 Kashima Antlers 3; Jubilo Iwata 1 Shimizu S-Pulse 1; Nagoya Grampus Eight 1 Sanfrecce Hiroshima 1; Omiya Ardija 1 Cerezo Osaka 0; Vissel Kobe 1 FC Tokyo 2; Oita Trinita 1 Urawa Reds 0.
Apr 3: Tokyo Verdy 1969 2 JEF United 2; Gamba Osaka 3 Kawasaki Frontale 2.

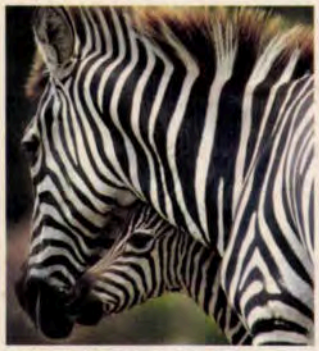
JAPAN

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
FC Tokyo	3	2	1	0	6	1	7
Kashima Antlers	3	2	1	0	6	3	7
Omiya Ardija	3	2	1	0	4	1	7
Yokohama FM	3	2	0	1	7	4	6
Grampus Eight	3	1	2	0	6	3	5
Tokyo Verdy	3	1	2	0	4	3	5
Vissel Kobe	3	1	1	1	5	4	4
Gamba Osaka	3	1	1	1	5	6	4
Jubilo Iwata	3	1	1	1	2	4	4
JEF United	3	0	3	0	6	6	3
Shimizu S-Pulse	3	0	3	0	2	2	3
Sanfrecce H	3	0	3	0	2	2	3
Oita Trinita	3	1	0	2	3	4	3
Albirex Niigata	3	1	0	2	3	9	3
K'saki Frontale	3	0	2	1	6	7	2
Kashiwa Reysol	3	0	2	1	4	6	2
Urawa Reds	3	0	1	2	3	5	1
Cerezo Osaka	3	0	0	3	3	7	0

the Knowledge

everything you need to know about...

Club nicknames



Black and white stripes...Juventus

JUVENTUS'S famous moniker *La Vecchia Signora* (the Old Lady) is simply a reflection of the club's status as the oldest and most successful club in Italy. Juve are also known by rival fans as *Gobbi* (hunchbacks) or the Zebras, after their black and white striped shirts.

Borussia Monchengladbach: *Fohlen* (foals). They were first called this in the early 1970s when a young, thrusting Gladbach side featuring Netzer, Heynckes, Vogts and Bonhof began to dominate in Germany. It stuck.

Coming from the coal-mining town of Gelsenkirchen, Schalke are logically known as the *Knappen*, an old-fashioned German term for miners.

Koln are the *Geissbock* (billy goats). The club were founded in one of the working-class districts of the Rhineland city, and goat is a term of abuse for the poor. To this day, Koln parade a mascot goat – named Hennes, after former coach Hennes Weisweiler – before every home game.

Heart of Midlothian are the Jambos or Jam Tarts in rhyming slang.

River Plate were dubbed *Los Millionaros* (millionaires) after their 1938 move from the working-class Buenos Aires district of Boca to a wealthier area. Boca Juniors, founded by Italian immigrants in 1905, have always been seen as the people's team, reflected in their nickname *Xeneize*, which translates as "from Genoa". Boca fans also refer to River as *Gallinas* (chickens); River fans call their rivals *Bosteros*, from the Spanish word for horse dung.

'River Plate fans call their Boca Juniors rivals *Bosteros*, from the Spanish word for horse dung'

Portsmouth: both the city and the club go by the name of Pompey. It stems from the act of Portsmouth-based sailors scaling Pompey's Pillar near Alexandria in Egypt.

Wealthy district...River Plate

Fiorentina: *Gigliati* (lillies). From the symbol of Florence, the fleur-de-lis. Venezia: *Lagunari* (the lagoon boys).

Sparta Prague are often called *Zelezna* (irons) thanks to the support they once drew from workers at the city's foundries. Bohemians Prague are known as the Kangaroos after going on tour to Australia in the mid-1920s.

Galatasaray have the strange nickname *Cim Bom Bom*. The Istanbul club, set up by students of a French high school, went on tour in the early 1900s to Switzerland, where they learnt a Swiss football song called Jim Bom Bom. On their return home it simply got lost in translation.

Ferencvaros: the top Hungarian side are much better known as *Fradi*, a shortened version of the German name for their district of Budapest, Franzstadt.

Olympique Marseille are referred to as *L'OM* (pronounced oh-eme) by their fans, but *Les Phoceens* is an alternative. Founded by Greeks, the city of Marseille was first called Phocea.

Atletico Madrid are known as *Los Colchoneros* (mattress makers) because their shirts have red and white stripes, a traditional pattern on Spanish mattresses.

Nimes are the Crocodiles. The emblem of the southern French city is a crocodile tied to a palm tree. Nimes was once a favourite place of retirement for Roman army officers who had conquered Egypt (the crocodile stands for Egypt and the palm symbolises victory).

Lying comfortably...Atletico Madrid

Lens are known as the *Sang et Or*, literally blood and gold.

Olympiakos are nicknamed *Thrylos* (legend), after their successful side of the 1930s. This featured a forward line exclusively made up of the five Andrianopoulos brothers.

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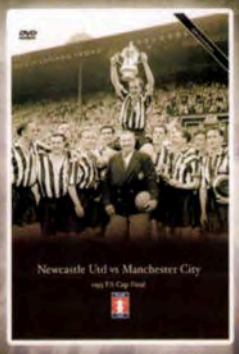
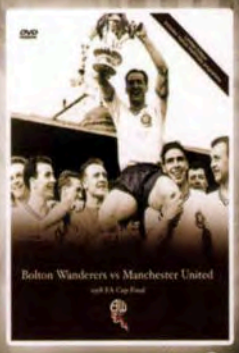


1955



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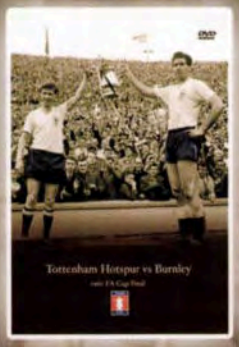

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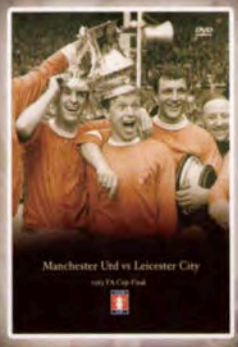
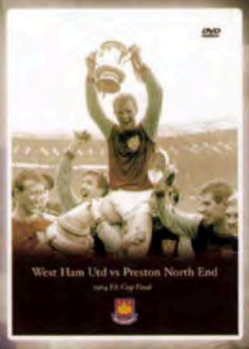


1963



1964

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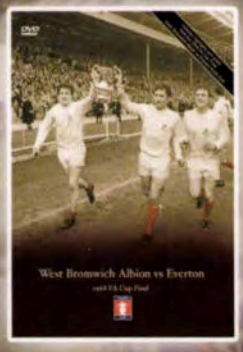

1968

1969

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